

I

Mendacity Enforced: Europe, 1914-1989

II

*Freedom and Its Discontents:
Postunification Germany*

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I

That the peaceful revolutions of 1989 were glorious and momentous was instantly recognized. Four years later the euphoria has dissipated, as nations confront the immense difficulties of building new institutions and of fighting economic hardships. It was marvelously inspiring to tame or topple Communist regimes; it is painful to create and adapt to market economies and liberal polities. For East Europeans —to say nothing of the peoples of the former Soviet Union —the daily struggles and privations, the new conflicts and corruptions, are dispiriting. The Western nations seem mired in the gloom of recession and political apathy; these same nations, the United States included, have been lavish in praise of the East but reticent in aid. And still: what happened in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia (and quite differently in East Germany) had grandeur; despite all the uncertainties, we know that the process of self-liberation from Communism is irreversible.

I believe that, seen in a longer historical perspective, the events of 1989 will assume a still greater magnitude: they were dramatic then, they are historic now. I consider 1989 as important in the history of Europe as 1914 — for it ended the epoch that began then. The Great War, which legitimated ever-escalating violence, was the beginning of a chain of horrors committed by national states that was carried to the ultimate extreme when two great ideological movements, born of war, captured the state and established our century's characteristic form of tyranny, totalitarianism. The war machines created ever new means of maiming and killing people —and inevitably the slaughter raised the most elemental questions and by a thousand means inhibited answers. Governments needed to deceive their people —and their people, at least

most of them, wanted to be deceived. Hate-filled untruths were concocted to rally or comfort the much-tested, grieving peoples of Europe; they confounded them still further. But brutal killing demanded a brutal or at least an anesthetized mind,

In 1917 the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia, determined that the war of nations had to be transformed into the historically prescribed conflict, a war of classes; put differently, the national war, according to Bolshevik doctrine, had sprung from and yet concealed the real subterranean war; an end to the imperialist war would signal the beginning of the real civil war. In the same year, provoked by German power, the United States entered the war and Wilson and Lenin began a duel for Europe's mind and soul. After 1945 the two powers confronted each other directly over a prostrate Europe —and for all the brief periods of détente and peaceful coexistence, the struggle on both sides was Manichean. In 1989 Communism collapsed —by now it is all but buried —and America, seemingly strong and victorious, having accumulated its own huge deficits that go far beyond the material, found its power, influence, and interest, even its role in Europe, diminished. After 1989 the rise of a new, autonomous Europe —at last spanning all of the historic Europe —seemed possible. It still does, though Europe's dismal failure to act in the civil war that is destroying the former Yugoslavia is tantamount to a declaration of temporary bankruptcy.

How did the peoples of Eastern Europe liberate themselves from structures and controls that had for so long been considered unassailable? As in all great historic upheavals, historians will come to recognize the confluence of many factors —for one, Communist rule in Eastern Europe never acquired true legitimacy, and a faltering economy gave added strength to a spirit of opposition that was never wholly quashed. The decline of Soviet authority began in the Brezhnev era: the irrepressible voices of dissidents, the presence of a Polish pope, the immense costs of the war in Afghanistan and the arms race with a technologically superior United States, Gorbachev's realization that *glasnost*' was a pre-

requisite for economic recovery, and the magnet of the much-heralded Europe '92 —these are some of the factors that future historians will have to assess.

For my purposes I want to emphasize what I think was the principal theme of the leaders of the revolution: Václav Havel's defiant insistence that men and women must have the right to "live in the truth." This, I believe, was the common inspiration of East European opponents of Soviet tyranny, and all of them sensed that liberation had to be peaceful —to protect lives and to prevent still further rounds of violence and untruth.

Allow me a personal aside: I was thrilled by the self-liberations of 1989; I saw them as the first peaceful, glorious revolution in our dark century. The round table, the civic forum, the disciplined thousands in the streets —all of these were spontaneous claims to emancipation, the desire for freedom and dignity. These velvet revolutions of poets and intellectuals gave voice to the millions who sustained them. The voice that struck me most forcefully was Havel's. He was a chronicler of what was spiritually intolerable. Hearing his defiant insistence that people must "live in the truth" I was suddenly struck that this was the very thing that had been denied to so many people in the decades after the Great War; that repression was the hallmark of the era —and I had experienced it in my own childhood and early adolescence. Havel's words struck me because they evoked memories of living under the enforced mendacity of National Socialism, of the double life: silence in a school in which classmates and teachers were joyfully National Socialist, with all the doctrinal and symbolic trappings that implied. And at home, the hushed —and no doubt partial and distorted —truth or corrective, a truth tempered by prudence. I had lived that kind of endangered double life: how could one not empathize with people who wanted to shake off its shackles —and do so at home rather than in exile abroad? Havel's words offered a key by which to understand and explicate what I thought was true: the continuities that marked those years.

The intellectual leaders of 1989, many of them former dissidents who had been imprisoned for their words more often than for their deeds (in those days, words were deeds), rebelled against the enforced mendacities, the dogmatic untruths and distortions. They demanded truth, sought truth, saw it as essential for any political and moral reconstruction. Havel, Bronislaw Geremek, Adam Michnik, and others wrote what many people *felt* and what propelled them to take risks, to go out on the street: they knew that their lives were being traduced by officially imposed lies, by a corrupt and decaying party claiming a monopoly of truth. Of course, people also rebelled against the unrelenting drabness of everyday life, against the imprisonment within the Soviet bloc, but they acted out of a deep revulsion against the daily lies of the enforced orthodoxy, against what George Orwell had recognized long ago as the party's corruption of the language, against what Havel called "evasive thinking." The daily compromises became unbearable, as did the sense that one's children were being indoctrinated in a travesty of truth.¹

It was this declared hunger for truth and commitment to non-violence that allows us to say that 1989 marks the end of an era in European history of unparalleled violence and untruth. The Great War saw the perfection of mendacious propaganda and created the conditions by which the totalitarian regimes could establish themselves, could use all the instrumentalities of power to control

¹ Attacking any economic interpretation of the Puritan Revolution, Thomas Carlyle imagined a Puritan's response to the tax-gatherer: "'Take my money, since you *can*, and it is so desirable to you; take it, —and take yourself away with it; and leave me alone to my work here. I am still here, can still work, after all the money you have taken from me!' but if they come to him, and say, 'Acknowledge a lie; pretend to say you are worshipping God, when you are not doing it; believe not the thing you find true, but the thing I find, or pretend to find true!' He will answer: 'No, by God's help, no! You may take my purse; but I cannot have my moral Self annihilated. The purse is any Highwayman's who might meet me with a loaded pistol: but the Self is mine and God my maker's; it is not yours; and I will resist you to the death, and revolt against you, and, on the whole, front all manner of extremities, accusations and confusions, in defense of that!'" "On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History," quoted in Fritz Stern (ed.), *The Varieties of History* (New York, 1973), p. 105.

and distort truth, to preach violence in order to practice it. I believe this chain of violence and untruth was broken in 1989.

A caveat must be entered at once: of course, untruthful dogma and subversive heresy have always existed. Dissimulation is to be found in nature and is even considered part of the evolutionary process.² Lying is part of life, despite the moral and pragmatic censure of it. But there have been times throughout history when dissimulation has become a collective, hence historical, phenomenon. Religious orthodoxy enforced by instruments such as the Inquisition has commanded conformity —and driven rival faiths to death or denial, and to dissimulation as a means of staying alive.” That lying is part of statecraft is enshrined in the modern idea of *raison d'état* —the link between mendacity and murder was one of Shakespeare’s dominant themes.

Most of us believe in some untruths or half-truths, whether we inherit or acquire them, whether they are communal or deeply personal. We may even sense that some half-truths are what Edmund Burke called “pleasing illusions.” The repression of truth as an individual act can be life-sustaining or life-destroying, but a coercive state power enforcing orthodoxy is always deadly for the heterodox. Of course many Bolsheviks and Nazis believed in their truths; they believed in them so much or so little that they banished all other truths. The fear of contamination by a different version of the truth is the trigger for instituting terror. I know that “truth” is a philosophical conundrum, but public truths traduced or suppressed are easily recognized, especially since they involve the falsification or expunging of the past. In the Communist countries the daily circumlocutions and euphemisms of the party were experienced as grating lies.

² See Randolph M. Nesse, “The Evolutionary Functions of Repression and the Ego Defenses,” *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1990), 260–85.

³ A major work on this theme is Perez Zagorin, *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution, and Conformity in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), which examines the historic texts justifying dissimulation.

It was in Enlightenment Europe as an idea, and in early-nineteenth-century liberal Europe as an approximation of reality, that there arose a presumption for liberty —by which at the time was meant free speech, free expressions, tolerance, heterodoxy, and a rule of law that would protect these. Scientific progress, based on rational experiment, strengthened and justified this faith in truth. I do not mean to suggest that in that period political leaders or ruling classes or historians did not bend truths, insist on nationalist dogmas and shibboleths, but in most advanced countries minority views enjoyed some protection. John Stuart Mill not only prescribed but reflected these liberal attitudes. The great liberal achievement, never unchallenged, was to have the state accept the legitimacy of lawful opposition and of a free press. These rights, enshrined in the American Bill of Rights, were approximated in parts of Europe as well. The liberal presumption was that to oppose orthodoxy no longer required martyrdom.

But the liberal-rational world was also, in Max Weber's words, a "disenchanted world." In a world, moreover, in which God Is Dead there is psychological-intellectual room for new pseudo-religious myths, and the "disenchanted" world before 1914 was full of myths and fabrications.⁴ There were repeated attempts at throttling the truth, the most notorious being the Dreyfus Affair, which ended with the vindication of truth by determined individuals using the instruments of a liberal society, a free press. The very arrogance of the Europeans at the height of their world power involved delusions: the assumption of Europe's racial superiority, for example, or the image of the ignoble savage. Imperial Ger-

⁴At the end of his life, Weber also warned against the intellectual's self-deception, an altogether common affliction, and he chose an extremely important instance: "the honesty of a contemporary *Gelehrte*, and above all of a contemporary philosopher, can be measured by how he confronts Nietzsche and Marx. Whoever does not acknowledge that major parts of his own work could not have been achieved without the work which those two did, deceives himself and others. The world in which we ourselves exist intellectually is to a large extent a world marked by Marx and Nietzsche." Quoted in Wilhelm Hennis, *Max Weber's Fragestellung: Studien zur Biographie des Werks* (Tübingen, 1987), p. 167.

many, the most powerful country in Europe, was beset by willfully self-deceiving rulers, with a vastly exaggerated fear of enemies at home and abroad. They believed that —reformist —Socialists were revolutionaries, and that foreign powers were encircling Germany. But against the forces of repression and mendacity were ranged corrective, reformist opponents. As but one example, as long as Jean Jaurès was alive, no political repression would go unchallenged. He was killed hours before the Great War broke out.

The Great War was the great denial of Europe. The state mobilized men and women “for the duration,” regulated the economic life of nations, and sought to capture or control the minds of people, perhaps nowhere more than in Germany. The high pitch of hatred and of released aggression did not and could not end on November 11, 1918. There was no spiritual armistice, no intellectual peace after Versailles. An enfeebled and still enraged Europe created the conditions for totalitarianism, for extremist traditions in Russia and Germany to dominate.

Both Bolshevism and National Socialism had deep roots in opposing strands of nineteenth-century thought. Once in power, these movements preached and practiced ideological bellicosity; mortal enemies deserved to be eliminated, they believed, so that a utopian vision could be realized. Both regimes instituted state terror. This terror was public in order to intimidate, but also concealed; the National Socialists often killed “in night and fog.” The proximity of the two regimes —for so long and by so many denied —has now become a kind of conventional truth that may, in turn, blind us to the differences that did exist.

I speak of the organized lie, and I will try to recall the many different manifestations of the suppression or distortion of truth. I will focus on Germany, the central power of Europe, which, beginning with the Great War, was subjected to a succession of lies; I will discuss the decision of the democratic German government in 1919 *not* to publish diplomatic documents that would have proven Imperial Germany’s particular responsibility for the out-

break of the war, a suppression that allowed the myth of Germany's total innocence to flourish. The Bolsheviks, also, were duplicitous from the beginning, claiming that duplicity was a weapon of "truth" against their implacable enemies. They *did* publish secret treaties that incriminated their immediate predecessors, but they had no use for truth, class-bound as they believed it to be; truth became what the party decided—hence it was infinitely malleable though at each turn the absolute canon. The National Socialists used different language but they too believed in "unmasking" their enemies—Jews, liberals, Socialists—as exploiters and despoilers. The political use of "unmasking" can be seen as a perverted tribute to "truth." (For the Soviets, "unmasking" often became a prelude to execution and hence acquired a desperately cynical note.) The Soviet-German Pact of 1939 was a triumph of reciprocal mendacity; for both powers it was a total repudiation of their ideological *raison d'être* and neither believed in it.

In the Soviet Union the show trials of the mid-1930s were a diabolical travesty of truth, facilitating the mass murders that accompanied them. Or consider the massacre at Katyn Forest; the Poles have always known that the Soviets killed their officers, but after the triumph of the Red Army, the Soviet lie holding Germans culpable had to be obeyed in every school and on every public occasion. As Lionel Trilling wrote in 1958, referring to Katyn: "These were the facts, all clear to the view. But it is characteristic of well-developed ideology that it can diminish or destroy the primitive potency of fact."⁵

After 1945 the dazed and exhausted Europeans did not want to confront the past. At first the Germans lived in willed amnesia: they could not mourn the collapse of a regime that so many had believed in; they could not focus on their own complicity. Silence and denial were the earliest reactions, as they were in some of the

⁵ Lionel Trilling, "Introduction," in *The Broken Mirror: A Collection of Writings from Contemporary Poland* (1958), reprinted in *Speaking of Literature and Society* (New York, 1982), p. 302.

countries Germany had briefly conquered. Myths and alibis veiled the divisive truth about past crimes and culpability. And historians —as so often before and after —served rather than confronted the national myths.

There are many different modes of suppressing the truth, and lies engender lies. For all those terrible years of 1914 to 1989 men wielding power sought to rely on mendacity and violence, each demanding the other, in order preemptorily to destroy any challenge to their power. They never fully succeeded: that, too, is part of the story, part of our memory.

The terror began with the Great War. August 1914 was a moment of unprecedented exaltation, especially in Germany, where the war was greeted as a liberation from all kinds of anxiety and boredom. Germans felt the thrill of unity, the more so as even the Socialists supported the war as being a defensive effort against tsarist Russia, bulwark of reaction. But in every country at the beginning, there was a spontaneous sense of the sanctity of service. The servants of God, among others, intoned the nobility of sacrifice and thus blessed the carnage.⁶

Governments of national unity, as they were called, recognized that people's minds —as well as goods and services —had to be mobilized. All manner of propaganda and censorship were put in place: truth —always the first casualty of war —was suppressed. The war saw the birth of modern political propaganda, of telling simplicities to manipulate people's minds. The injunction "Love your country and defend it" in time became "Hate your enemy and kill him."

⁶ Churches had not been immune to bellicose chauvinism even before the war. Consider one example of how churches adapted themselves to the nationalist ethos of the time: during the second Morocco crisis in 1911, the chief German Protestant paper, *Allgemeine evangelisch-lutherische Kirchenzeitung*, wrote, "Better war than giving in! . . . [Nations require] for their healthy education that occasionally the Almighty calls them to task." Quoted in *Die Zeit*, July 19, 1991. See also A. J. Hoover, *God, Germany, and Britain in the Great War: A Study in Clerical Nationalism* (New York, 1989).

There was of course a beleaguered minority who from the beginning believed that the war was a tragedy for European civilization. As the war continued with ever greater losses and no apparent cause but greed and hatred, the dissent gradually became louder: workers struck and soldiers mutinied. The styles of suppression differed from country to country, but everywhere the spontaneity of patriotism yielded to ever greater regimentation.

The Allies railed against the harshness of the Germans' occupation and fabricated atrocity stories about them. Germans did not hack off the hands of Belgian children, though they did shoot hostages and deported hundreds of thousands of Belgian workers to the Reich.⁷ For the British, in particular, the much-esteemed German of the prewar period became the hated Hun. The British government installed a Press Bureau, which clever people quickly dubbed the "Suppress Bureau" —it might have served as a name for European censorship in general.⁸

German censorship, easily organized, served concealment. The people were not to know that the battle of the Marne had thwarted Germany's plans for victory. The Reichsbank concealed its disastrous inflationary policy; in 1915 a respected bank director, Ludwig Bendixen, wrote an article against a government policy of which "the result is that one simply does not believe us anymore. Thus we discredit our integrity and the healthy position of the Reichsbank with a hateful trick that we could easily do without." The article could not be published until 1919.⁹

The government could not articulate its grandiose war aims; it lacked a universal principle to justify the sacrifices it was asking

⁷ For a brilliant —and surprising —comparison of the two German occupations during the two world wars, see Richard Cobb, *French and Germans, Germans and French: A Personal Interpretation of France under Two Occupations 1914-1918/1914-1944* (Hanover and London, 1983).

⁸ M. L. Sanders and Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War, 1914-1918* (London, 1982), p. 20.

⁹ Gerald D. Feldman was kind enough to send me proofs of his forthcoming work on the German inflation: *The Great Disorder: Politics, Economics, and Society in the German Inflation* (New York, 1993), p. 36.

of its citizens, and the leaders thought that only the promise of a *Siegfrieden* could preserve German morale. What unacknowledged contempt they had for their people! These masters of the military-industrial-agrarian complex also believed that only a total victory, establishing Germany as the unassailable hegemonial power in Europe, could preserve their preeminence, preserve the constitutional provisions on which their power rested. So the leaders fought a double war: against a ring of enemies abroad *and* against political opponents at home who wanted to alter the Constitution in order to rid it of its most blatantly undemocratic features. Meanwhile the facts about the war had to be censored, enemies pilloried, imperialist war aims concealed.

In the summer of 1917 moderate leaders in the Reichstag successfully pushed for a resolution urging a “peace of reconciliation.” Amidst the sudden political crisis this created, Walther Rathenau, a self-conscious Jew who in 1914 had persuaded the military that German raw materials had to be husbanded and who had been put in charge of the allocation of these resources, told Ludendorff that he, too, had his doubts about a *Siegfrieden*. Ludendorff insisted that he was not opposed to a negotiated peace but that the mood of the country was against it. Rathenau replied that the mood had been carefully cultivated: the “English way. . . of constantly pointing out to the nation the seriousness of the situation [was better]. We had emasculated opinion by three years of deception, at least thirty illusions had come into being during that time and were completely believed.”¹⁰

The Reichstag’s resolution enraged the right-wing diehards, who instantly organized a new party —pan-German, wildly annexationist, violently antisemitic. This Fatherland party quickly gained a million members and exulted in attacks on “weaklings of the Left.” Army censorship shielded them to some extent, but

¹⁰ Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann (ed.), *Walther Rathenau: Industrialist, Banker, Intellectual and Politician, Notes and Diaries 1907–1922* (Oxford, 1985), p. 229.

Max Weber warned against these “swaggering braggarts” for whose wild program the soldiers at the front would be shedding their blood. Soldiers returning to Germany should not have to face a future in which “war profiteers had exclusive power.”¹¹ The Fatherland party, with its support from the German elites, was a foretaste of that embittered hatred that came to characterize the defeated Germany.

In the spring of 1918, and largely as a result of the Bolshevik Revolution, the Germans seemed once more close to victory. At Brest-Litovsk they dictated a Carthaginian peace to the Bolsheviks and took control over vast areas of Eastern Europe, including the Ukraine. Its armies, freed from fighting in the East, launched one more offensive in the West —and nearly succeeded in reaching Paris. By July the offensive had stalled; by August the German armies had suffered their “black day”; in September Ludendorff panicked, demanding the immediate installation of a democratic government to appeal instantly to President Wilson for an armistice. When Ludendorff’s representative informed the Reichstag deputies in secret session that the war was lost, that at any moment the armies might disintegrate, the deputies were stunned, incredulous —and many wept. Deception and willed self-deception had done their work; most Germans were estranged from reality. A people had been misled —in all senses of the word.

The disbelieving Germans surrendered to a new illusion: they believed that President Wilson would become the guarantor of a mild peace. Wilson demanded that Germany form a reliable democratic regime. As the fighting continued, the old order finally collapsed; the Kaiser fled to Holland, but the old, now frightened, cadres remained intact. The Socialists assumed power, but to what end? As patriotic receivers of a bankrupt country or as revolutionaries who would fashion a new order? On November 11, on the last day of universal rejoicing, no one knew the answer.

¹¹ Max Weber, *Gesammelte politische Schriften* (Munich, 1921), pp. 143–45.

Germany's new leaders, ominously (for the bourgeois) called the Council of People's Commissars, inherited chaos and hatred: how could they establish a new republican order amidst such unprecedented collapse, with millions of people in the streets? Most German Socialists — stolid patriots — were desperately afraid that the political upheaval could end in a social revolution. We now know that there was no real danger of a Bolshevik coup, but fear of it then inhibited radical reform. The new rulers also faced the inevitable question in such a situation: how should they deal with the failures and deceptions of the old regime? What about German leadership before and during the war? Defeat was hard enough for Germans to grasp. There was spontaneous anger at the old rulers, and officers had their epaulettes torn from their uniforms. A true reckoning with the past might push anger into revolution — or so some of the new rulers thought.

In November 1918 Kurt Eisner, an Independent Socialist who had become minister-president of Bavaria, published in abbreviated form some diplomatic reports from the Bavarian minister in Berlin of July 1914. They showed a Jingoist, irresponsible Kaiser and an aggressive German policy. There was an outcry against what people thought was Eisner's treason. Eisner was a Socialist — and a Jew. German Jews had a habit of disturbing the taboos of sentimental Germans: thus Marx in regard to economic interests, Freud in regard to the unconscious power of sexual impulses, and now Eisner in regard to the origins of the war. But the issue was central — and the Council of Commissars in Berlin had to deal with it. It commissioned Karl Kautsky, the leading prewar Socialist theorist and by now, like Eisner, an Independent Socialist, to study and collect the documents relating to German policy before the outbreak of the war. In March 1919 Kautsky submitted to the government a selection of documents making clear that in the weeks after Francis Ferdinand's assassination in 1914 German policy had been anything but peaceful. The Kaiser's marginalia were an embarrassment of bellicose bombast. These documents

disproved all German assertions of innocence. The old regime had deceived its own people.

Even as the Allies were hammering out the peace terms in Paris, a newly elected German government, a coalition of Socialists, Centrists, and Democrats, met on March 22, 1919, to debate whether to publish these documents. President Ebert participated, an uncommon occurrence, and surprisingly —given his conservative leanings—urged publication: “Condemn in sharpest terms the sins of the old regime. Define the position of the new government.” A fellow-Socialist, Eduard David, who had supported the war, seconded him: “The old system cannot be defended anymore. Principal content of our announcement in Paris must be that we are not responsible for decisions over which we had no influence. Moral guilt [*Schuld*] rests to a large extent with the German side.” Eugen Schiffer, a Democrat, argued against publication, fearing the domestic repercussions —and for the moment, his side won. Two weeks later the issue was raised again and David again demanded publication, arguing that the Allies knew the substance of these documents already; under the circumstances “only complete clarity and truth” could help. But the spirit of the old system lingered on, and the new government decided against discrediting it, against publishing the incriminating documents.

In August the first postwar Congress of the Majority Socialists debated the war guilt question. Most speakers congratulated the party on its Socialist patriotism and argued against national self-incrimination. Only the old irenic revisionist Eduard Bernstein, who out of anger at the war had joined the Independent Socialists, called for disclosure and warned his party against remaining prisoners of its original decision supporting the war: “Let us liberate ourselves from the bourgeois concepts of honor; only the truth, the full truth can help us.” It was not to be.¹²

¹² I was first alerted to this issue by the historian Heinrich August Winkler’s article “Die verdrängte Schuld,” *Die Zeit*, March 17, 1989. See also Hagen Schulze

The consequences of this concealment are staggering, while counterfactual arguments about what might have happened if the government had acknowledged German responsibility are necessarily speculative. But it is clear that silence allowed the entire nationalist Right in Germany to propagate what was later dubbed the *Kriegsunschuldlige* or the lie of German innocence. Article 231 of the Versailles Peace Treaty, the so-called war-guilt clause, enraged Germans of all classes. They believed that if the Allies were claiming that Germany was responsible for the war, then the opposite must be true. The notorious article —so it seems— was drafted by a young member of the American delegation, John Foster Dulles; it was an early example of the misplaced moralistic streak in his work. In fact, the article was not intended to determine war guilt; but when the Germans challenged Article 231, Wilson himself, to their distress, agreed that the Germans were responsible for starting the war and that the article could not be deleted. There was no alternative but to sign the treaty —or face the resumption of hostilities.

The German Right now possessed an inestimable capital of mendacious arguments against the Weimar (or the “Jew”) Republic that had signed the infamous article, besmirched the fatherland, and acknowledged a guilt that allegedly did not exist. To such Germans, the very harshness of the treaty proved that already in 1914 the Allies had been plotting against Germany. Now the full indictment against Weimar could be drawn up: Socialists, pacifists, and Jews had not only stabbed an undefeated German army in the back but had betrayed the honor of the nation as well.

No single allegation was so damaging to the Republic as these untruths and none so widely disseminated. Hitler’s endless attacks against “the November traitors” was his most successful, most widely accepted nationalist argument. How prescient is Bernstein’s

(ed.), *Das Kabinett Scheidemann, 13 February to 20 June 1919* (Boppard am Rhein, 1971), pp. 87–88, 146–47; and Ulrich Heineman, *Die verdrängte Niederlage: Politische Öffentlichkeit und Kriegsschuldfrage in der Weimarer Republik* (Göttingen, 1983).

letter of 1924 to his old ideological foe Karl Kautsky: the nationalists' claims of innocence taught the people that " 'the Jew-Republic' and its fulfillment policy was responsible for all the evil that Germany suffers from today. We are moving toward the nationalists' coup d'état. . . . Those who would emerge on top this time are unscrupulous brutal thugs." Bernstein died six weeks before the thugs assumed power in 1933 — not by a coup d'état but by beguiling or deceiving a third of the German electorate and a large part of the German elites. Four years later Hitler declared the signature of Article 231 invalid, and two years later he began the *revanchiste* war.

This is a rare instance where we can reconstruct how so portentous a decision was reached. We know the Cabinet majority in March 1919 acted out of what they believed to be patriotism and prudence. They feared that if they did not suppress the truth Allied vengeance and right-wing nationalist fury at home would increase.

But one must ask: could the nationalist reaction against the Republic have been any worse than it was? Could it have done more than it did — trying to overthrow it in 1920, assassinating its leaders, beginning with Eisner, denouncing its "fulfillment policy," and drawing strength from the mendacious notion of German innocence?

Ebert and his partisans believed that telling the truth about the myopic egoism and recklessness of the old regime could have enhanced the embattled legitimacy of the new Republic. I agree, and I believe the documented truth — though it would not have converted the Right, aggrieved by the country's defeat and the decline of its own power — would have been a brake on its self-righteousness. The government's silence encouraged others to remain silent as well and allowed for a kind of national conspiracy to believe in a fatal falsehood.

Historians were not exempt from this conspiracy of silence — even when they knew better. Thus, in a private letter in late

October 1918, Friedrich Meinecke wrote that in the face of defeat he, like everyone else, would wish for an honorable death, adding, “A frightful, dark existence awaits us under all circumstances! And as much as my hatred for the bestial greed of our enemies smolders in me, equally hot is my anger and outrage about the German power politicians, who through their arrogance and stupidity have driven us into this abyss.”¹³

Such thoughts were kept to private correspondence. With a few exceptions, German historians continued to deny major responsibility for 1914 until well after the Second World War. They were outraged in 1962, when Fritz Fischer, on the basis of new documents, established that Germany had pursued an aggressive forward policy in July 1914.¹⁴

The Great War had brutalized, weakened, and radicalized Europe, but there was nothing inevitable about its further descent into totalitarian violence and mendacity. Indeed, in the immediate aftermath of the war, there was cause for hope: the Treaty of Versailles, however flawed, had established a new order in record time. Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, and Balts could feel that the Wilsonian principle of national self-determination had liberated them. The League of Nations theoretically provided the machinery for peaceful change and for collective action against aggressors. The early 1920s were in many ways a high watermark for European democracy, and later in the decade the names of Aristide Briand and Gustav Stresemann evoked the hope that the historic conflict between France and Germany might be overcome.

Still, the war had bred such deep resentments, fears, and intransigence and had so weakened Europe’s material and moral con-

¹³ Hans-Georg Drescher, *Ernst Troeltsch: Leben und Werk* (Göttingen, 1991), p. 453.

¹⁴ On the Fischer debate and the outrageous attempt by older German historians to silence him, see my “German Historians and the War: Fischer and His Critics,” as well as “Bethmann Hollweg and the War: The Bounds of Responsibility,” in *The Failure of Illiberalism: Essays on the Political Culture of Modern Germany* (New York, reissue, 1992), pp. 147–58 and 77–118.

ditions that efforts at pacification, often proffered late and grudgingly, failed. The economic consequences of the peace (to evoke John Maynard Keynes's legendary denunciation of Versailles) manifested the inextricable mixture of economic, political, and psychological factors. Again the German experience was central — with effects still felt today: no event so dramatized the manifold insecurities of the time as the hyperinflation in Weimar Germany. A bourgeois government expropriated its own middle class, mendaciously blaming Allied reparation claims for the disaster. A major work on the hyperinflation concludes that it introduced “elements of barbarism into the political culture of Germany” that help to explain “that peculiarly hideous combination of indifference and careerism that characterized the behavior of so many intellectual workers in the Third Reich.”¹⁵

During the war minds had been poisoned by nationalist simplicities; wars rarely offer lessons in complexity. Opponents of the war became militant pacifists or antimilitarists and had their own cast of villains. George Grosz and Otto Dix carried on a merciless, brilliant campaign against Europe's ancient warrior caste, especially venerated in Germany. This friend-foe thinking was hardly conducive to the development of democratic polities.

Bolshevism, Fascism, and National Socialism were ideologies claiming a monopoly of truth: part of their appeal was the promise of absolute authority. These apparently radically different systems — Bolshevism was rational and scientific, National Socialism intuitive-mystical — dispelled uncertainties by “unmasking” conspiratorial groups of “wreckers” and “wirepullers” that caused evil. They all offered visions of redemption, of the “new Soviet man” or of the “Aryan superman” in a new *Volksgemeinschaft*. Totalitarians glorified decisiveness and swept away parties and parliaments. As servants of providence or of the historic process, their leaders identified their own demand for power with the dictates of their aggressive ideology. They became ruthless warriors

¹⁵ Feldman, *The Great Disorder*, p. 858.

on behalf of their utopian visions: they killed out of a composite of hatred, dogma, and a desperate, paranoid will to power.

The greatest delusion that these totalitarian movements spawned was the belief in their radical opposition to each other. Fascists or National Socialists were anti-Communist, Communists were anti-Fascist, and they did kill each other, as in the Spanish Civil War. But this sworn enmity concealed a common nature and a common hatred for bourgeois life and bourgeois values. Their common enemy was liberal Europe and human rights. The certainty of their unalterable opposition was a major source of their strength: they lived off each other.

To see how this dynamic worked, we must go back to 1917, Europe's year of desperation. It was also in that year that Germany —too weak to achieve a victorious peace and too strong to accept a negotiated one —expanded the war. By resorting to unrestricted submarine warfare, Germany's divided leaders thought they could starve Britain into submission, even if the United States entered the war. So it was German power that brought the United States to Europe, just as its stratagem to return Lenin to Russia enabled Bolshevism to triumph in Russia.

One gamble came terrifyingly close to success: the submarines did nearly destroy British shipping. The other gamble, the transport of Lenin, succeeded, in the short run. The Germans were playing with fire —only to suffer from the conflagration. By these decisions they unwittingly introduced a new ideological fervor to the war: both Wilson and Lenin believed in visions transcending the nationalist passions that had thus far informed the war. Our century —so proud in so many ways of its rational capacity for planning, for calculating results —has seen a daunting succession of historic decisions recklessly taken.

Lenin: a dominant figure who will remain controversial even after his empire has vanished. His brother was killed by tsarist thugs; in him, personal venom and Marxist doctrine at its most bellicose coincided. He had no doubt that he and his little band

of fellow-revolutionaries were the executors of a historic process and that his enemies would end in the dustbin of history.

From 1914 to 1917 Lenin opposed all Socialist pleas for ending the war, believing that utter exhaustion would signal the moment for a proletarian revolution. His call for “revolutionary defeatism” had no compassion for those still to be slaughtered. The war was the locomotive of history that should run to its appointed end, the destruction of the capitalist-imperialist world — not for him the “sentimental” desire for peace.

No sooner back in Russia, then, Lenin and his comrades plotted the overthrow of the Kerensky government. But he — and *a fortiori* Leon Trotsky and Grigory Zinoviev — did not believe in a merely Russian revolution; when a tiny minority seized power in October, they thought that their fragile victory would be the prelude to a world revolution. At the very least, it would be followed by a revolution in Germany, where a large, disciplined proletariat would eventually tire of being sacrificed in an imperialist war. Bolshevism was a speculation in Europe’s bankruptcy.

The prospects for a revolutionary regime in Russia were dismal; the prospects for a European conflagration seemed better, and the Bolsheviks saw the latter as the only means of saving the former. Within hours of seizing power, they issued a “Declaration of Peace,” addressed —characteristically —both to the warring governments *and* to the international proletariat. They demanded an immediate armistice, then a universal peace without annexations or indemnities. To the Allies, this bid for world salvation was rank treason. To the German government, it signaled the sudden prospect of a German victory. To the war-weary peoples of Europe, and to some disillusioned Socialists and intellectuals, it sounded a new note of hope.

In that first hour the Soviet appeal or temptation was born. Here was more than an alternative to tsarist autocracy, to an obscurantist empire that was, in Lenin’s words, “a prisonhouse of

nationalities.”¹⁶ Here was an alternative to a class-ridden, imperialist order that had turned all Europe into a slaughterhouse. Here were heirs of the French Revolution promising the next stage of historical development: socialism, egalitarianism, peace. Was not Lenin, in his simple suit and simple style, the living antithesis of the bemedaled general and the purse-proud magnate? To those hungry for belief, Lenin appeared as the emancipator, the liberator of talent, the proletarian (which he was not) in power. Those who knew him best —such as Rosa Luxemburg —apprehended the truth; her response to the October Revolution, however sympathetic, included the early warning that “freedom is always freedom for the one who disagrees with you.” The image of the idealistic revolutionary was of course at odds with Lenin at home. He never doubted that the Bolshevik party would have to establish a dictatorship that would act for the proletariat.¹⁷

From the very first day and first decree, Bolshevism was the great divider of, the great deceiver in, Europe. Its enemies fastened only on its atrocities, only on its terror, which began almost at once. Its sympathizers clung to the rhetoric about its final aims and egalitarian promise —they blamed “reactionaries” for what was in fact the Bolsheviks’ inherent ruthlessness.

The Bolsheviks’ demand for universal peace fell on deaf ears; they had to sue for peace, but the Germans dictated a peace that robbed the new regime of some of the richest parts of old Russia. For Lenin, there was no alternative but to submit to this, and in his hardest dispute with his fellow-revolutionaries he carried the day. To him, even the most appalling peace was a condition for sur-

¹⁶ Adam Ulam, *The Bolsheviks* (New York, 1965), p. 391.

¹⁷ In 1904, when Trotsky attacked Lenin’s “orthodox theocracy,” he also warned against “substitutism”: “the party organization [the caucus] at first substitutes itself for the party as a whole; then the central committee substitutes itself for the organization; and finally a single ‘dictator’ substitutes himself for the Central Committee.” Quoted in Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed: Trotsky: 1879–1921* (Oxford and London, 1954), p. 90. A decade and a half later Trotsky became Lenin’s lieutenant in establishing just such a system of substitution.

vival. His policy already prefigured Stalin's later call for "socialism in one country."

For a brief moment in 1919 the Soviet hope for a chain of revolutions seemed realizable: in Hungary and Bavaria short-lived Communist regimes were established; in Germany there were Communist uprisings. Within weeks these attempts were crushed, and their only lasting effect was to add to capitalist fright.

Indeed, the capitalist world took the Bolshevik threat with desperate seriousness, with contempt, and with fear. Western statesmen vacillated between a hope for accommodation and a wish to strangle, while the Bolsheviks simultaneously sought recognition as a normal state and as a revolutionary power tried to subvert other states. British and French workers had little use for Bolshevism at home, but they were unwilling to support yet another military venture, this time against weak but militant Socialists. Still, France, Britain, and the United States did intervene in Russia, with risible means and forces far too weak to overthrow the Soviets. Their very presence, however, confirmed Soviet assumptions that a state of war necessarily (objectively, to use that dreadful term) had to exist —and also gave the Bolsheviks a pretext to appear as the hapless victims of capitalist aggression.

Lenin was to discover, as he put it, that in no country was it so easy to gain power and so difficult to maintain it as in Russia. Inside Russia, the Bolsheviks faced civil war and chaos. They themselves enhanced the chaos by their efforts to destroy the bastions of capitalism and the existing property relations, all the coercive measures known as war communism. And weeks after the Revolution the Bolsheviks organized a new secret police known as Cheka, their own instrument of terror. Even among the small urban proletariat (as compared to the mass of the peasantry) there were few Bolsheviks, and former allies (Social Revolutionaries and Anarchists) were gradually hounded and eliminated.

Terror and mendacity became instruments of Soviet administration: Russia had become a dictatorship —not of any class, but

of the party, which became the final, the only authority in the Soviet state, the sole repository of truth. Lenin warned against diluting its cadre: “careerists and charlatans, who deserved only to be shot, inevitably strive to attach themselves to the ruling party.”¹⁸ By definition those who were shot deserved to be shot. The mutineering sailors at the Kronstadt naval base in 1921, murdered for their insistence that pledges of proletarian democracy be honored —the very group Lenin had called “the pride and beauty of the Revolution” —were now slandered as petty bourgeois, anarchists, or counterrevolutionaries.¹⁹

The eventual triumph of the Bolsheviks in Russia had a decisive and divisive effect everywhere in the world and brought on a latent civil war in most other countries. When the Bolsheviks founded the Third Internationale, the Comintern, the very name identified their principal foe: the Second Internationale of Democratic Socialists. In time Moscow wiped out all vestiges of independence in the Communist parties elsewhere in the world; in democratic countries, these parties operated openly and competed in national elections; everywhere they also operated covertly through intricate networks of agents and infiltrators.

Equally determinative were the sworn enemies of Bolshevism: the *bien pensants* of every country and every church inveighed against Soviet atrocities, against the godless bandits who threatened all values, all traditions, everything that was sacrosanct, including private property. In the beginning the Entente powers depicted the Bolsheviks as German-Jewish agents; Churchill’s assessment that the Bolsheviks were but “the rabble from the East European ghettos” was quite representative. So the anti-Bolshevik campaign began early and took immensely ugly forms; thereafter, the anti-Bolsheviks were just as free in their calumnies as their enemies.

¹⁸ V. I. Lenin, “*Left-Wing*” *Communism, an Infantile Disorder* (Moscow, 1952), p. 51.

¹⁹ Ulam, *The Bolsheviks*, p. 472.

Fascism thrived on the perceived Bolshevik dangers. How these sworn enemies approximated each other and even served each other very few people in that time understood. Oddly enough, it was a Bolshevik, N. I. Bukharin, “the darling of the party,” who acknowledged similarities in April 1923 at the Twelfth Congress of the Russian Communist Party. A bourgeoisie unable to govern the economic life of its country, he explained, resorts to these Fascist parties. Bukharin referred specifically to Mussolini as well as to Hitler’s movement as the most important German Fascist organization. Fascism represents “a peculiar form of legalizing civil war. . . . It is characteristic of the methods of the Fascist struggle that to a greater degree than all other parties they have appropriated the experience of the Russian Revolution and apply it practically. They have used Bolshevik tactics for their own purposes.”²⁰ I know of no other acknowledgment of affinity from an authoritative Soviet source.

The appeals of Communism continued for decades. The Communist parties outside Russia attracted millions of the most aggrieved members of the proletariat —as well as some intellectuals. (The working class was thus split between Communists and Socialists.) The Bolsheviks could also count on a large band of sympathizers of varying degree of loyalty, fellow-travelers, as they were called. These saw in the Bolsheviks some kind of potential hope, saw them perhaps as barbarians of promise, and fastened on Soviet successes, of which there seemed to be many. This was the spirit that animated Sidney and Beatrice Webb’s Fabian tract *Russia: A New Civilization?* The psychology of fellow-traveling included the yearning for the new faith, the wish to be thought “progressive” and at one with the working class. As Czeslaw Milosz put it in 1951: “To belong to the masses is the great longing of the ‘alienated’ intellectual.”²¹

²⁰ I owe this reference to my colleague Peter Krupnikov of the University of Riga.

²¹ Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind* (New York, 1955), p. 8.

Fellow-traveling with the Communist party almost always involved some kind of emotional or intellectual alienation from the bourgeois world, some deep-seated antagonism to capitalist life. In the 1930s the anti-Fascist impulse proved very powerful: Fascism was the immediate aggressor. Almost always, fellow-traveling involved a measure of self-deception, a wish not to see what was all too apparent, not to believe what seemed incontrovertible.²²

But sympathizers found it desperately hard to break with the party or abandon the hope. To believe in the truth about Soviet atrocities and betrayals, to see Leninism and later Stalinism for

²² In the moral-intellectual history of our century, the phenomenon of “the God That Failed” —even the ironic invocation of a deity is suggestive —is central and it may take a long time to understand it. Rather than appear pharisaic in my judgments, I would want to recount my own experiences, however trivial or commonplace they were. Between the ages of seven and twelve —that is, until 1938 —I lived under National Socialism; I remember the early victims of the regime as well as the awesome choreography of Nazi will and power. But I also remember the thrill of surreptitiously listening to Radio Moscow, the *frisson* of hearing the forbidden text in German “proletarians of the world, unite,” followed by the Internationale. The twelve-year-old believed in the anti-Fascism of the Communists and my passions were all on the side of the Spanish Loyalists. I remember the secret delight at the shamefaced German announcement of the Fascist defeat at Guadalajara.

The news of the German-Soviet pact shattered that world and I shed my first political tears. How fortunate the lesson! I was appalled at teachers who insisted that America should stay out of “the imperialist war” —until on June 22, 1941, the war became the great anti-Fascist crusade. Soviet resistance revived earlier hopes, but a protective skepticism had been added. In 1943, after Stalin’s murder of two Polish-Jewish labor leaders, Henryk Erlich and Victor Alter, I went to a protest meeting, at which brave union leaders denounced the murder; at some point New York’s irrepressible mayor, Fiorello La Guardia, appeared, jumped on the platform, mourned the dead, and warned: “And I say to Uncle Joe: Don’t do it again.” Even then I was struck by the cheerfully naive response.

I was reluctant to accept the truth about slave labor camps and gulags: were these perhaps fabrications or exaggerations of the extreme Right? By 1948, after the Czech coup and the death or murder of Jan Masaryk, any hopes born, say, of Stalingrad vanished. In 1954, teaching at the Free University of Berlin, I became visually aware of the resemblance between the two totalitarian regimes. At the same time I watched apprehensively the giant marshaling of anti-Communism in America during the McCarthy era and at home experienced the insolent intolerance of some professional anti-Communist intellectuals. My passion came to be with the dissidents in Eastern Europe, with the Poles and Hungarians in 1956, with the Czechs a decade later, with the Soviet dissidents I came to know in Russia in 1979, and above all with the Polish opposition I first encountered in Poland in 1979, with Bronislaw Geremek and Adam Michnik. I give this summary to orient the reader: I have had a smattering of the Soviet appeal —at a safe distance.

what it was —that was to play into the hands of Fascists or reactionaries. George Orwell, a Socialist, a foe of imperialism and of Fascism, put it clearly: “Everyone who has ever had anything to do with publicity or propaganda can think of occasions when he was urged to tell lies about some vitally important matter, because to tell the truth would give ammunition to the enemy.”²³

The strength of Communism’s earlier appeal must not be forgotten today, with the crumbling of the Soviet Union. Its appeal had deep psychological-political meaning. It will take tact and empathy to understand why for so many Communism seemed different from what it was: a most terrible union of utopian dreams, bellicose dogma, paranoid terror, and the brutal suppression of all opposition, real and imagined. Will future generations remember how easily people became “unpersons” and had their lives posthumously expunged? Orwell invented nothing; he dramatized the truth and transposed history to fiction—so that people could grasp the truth more easily.

And what of the appeal of Fascism? The Great War gave Bolshevism its chance —and the same is true of Fascism and National Socialism. Prewar Europe had known a longing for Fascism before Fascism itself. Writers and intellectuals spoke of their yearning for a new authority, for community, for national discipline and greatness. They hated the liberal, bourgeois world. In France and Austria, for example, mass movements vaguely expressed these feelings. The war offered community and meaning to those people whose previous lives had been materially and spiritually impoverished; after the war many of these people felt adrift, alienated, rootless, unwilling to return to an anonymous

²³ *As I Please 1943–1945: Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (New York, 1968), vol. 3, p. 170. Orwell also knew about the great reluctance of publishers to accept anti-soviet writings. In June 1944 he reported to T. S. Eliot, then an editor with a British publisher, that some authority or other had urged that in *Animal Farm* “some other animal than pigs might be made to represent the Bolsheviks” (ibid., p. 176).

humdrum life in a bourgeois world. For some, adventure and violence had become addictive.

Benito Mussolini, a brutal if literate misfit, knew how to exploit the thirst for action experienced by the discharged but not emotionally demobilized soldiers. At the same time he played on the immense fears of the propertied classes in the face of “red” dangers, aroused especially by the sit-down strikes of 1919. As a prominent ex-Socialist, he knew how explosive the idea and reality of class war could be; he sought to transcend or deny it in a brilliantly orchestrated invocation of national grandeur. At the same time the Fascists before 1922 were marauding thugs; the brutal *squadristi* resorted to torture, a practice that a liberal Europe had foresworn.

The specter of Bolshevism haunted Italy, though there was no possibility of a Bolshevik coup. Landless peasants and underpaid workers had a vague notion that life was better in “the workers’ paradise.” More importantly, the propertied lost all faith in parliamentary solutions; the emergence of mass parties, the Socialists and the Catholic Popolari, made them realize their own political vulnerability. In Mussolini they saw their protector, and many of them supported him.

Yet the march on Rome in 1922 was a sham — a proper beginning for what came to be dazzling choreography, deceit and terror, and very little substance. Mussolini in power proceeded slowly: at first he collaborated with other parties, tolerated opposition newspapers, and tried to ameliorate economic conditions. The break came in 1925, after the Fascist murder of Giacomo Matteotti, a courageous Socialist who had exposed Fascist complicity in crime. Mussolini’s opponents were outraged, but took no effective action; after some hesitation Mussolini acknowledged responsibility for the crime and swiftly established a dictatorship. Now he suppressed, imprisoned, or exiled his opponents; all opposition was stamped out and conformity imposed; there was to be no cultural or intellectual life outside Fascist control. The willing subservience

of intellectuals —born of some mixture of enthusiasm, careerism, and fear —helped the regime; some intellectuals tried to accommodate *and* criticize. The much-vaunted Fascist corporatism represented some veiled collusion between the party and the propertied classes, with incidental benefits to workers. The Duce sought to reduce politics to intimidating pageantry —with terror as the ultimate weapon.

Strident nationalism marked Mussolini's foreign policy, aggressive in form and cautious in substance. With the help of foreign loans, the economy recovered; with the Vatican's imprimatur in the form of the Lateran Treaty of 1929, the regime acquired new respectability, even exuded political glamour. Some Westerners, including Churchill and G. B. Shaw, thought of the Duce, the dictator, as the incarnation of the strong man, a new authority, who made trains run on time, drained swamps, restored national pride. The world had yet to learn that the brutality Mussolini had unleashed against Italians could —under the right international circumstances —also be unleashed against foreigners, against Ethiopians and against Republican Spaniards. What Bolshevism was for the left, Fascism came to be for the Right: a vision of an efficient and exciting alternative to the dull routine of "bourgeois" democracy. It had many admirers. Even after its demise there has remained a condescendingly benevolent memory of Fascism, as if all that was remembered was the theatricality and not the terror.²⁴

The vilest form of Fascism developed in Germany, where the Great War had brought incalculable losses: the bereavement of millions, the presence everywhere of multilated veterans, disrupted and disoriented lives even among the physically unaffected —and all this suffering after the gigantic exertions of the war. Humiliated and with a deep sense of instability, many Germans clung to the notion that all misery had its ultimate cause in the *Dolch-*

²⁴A splendid analysis of the difference in practice between Germans and Italians during the Second World War may be found in Jonathan Steinberg's *All or Nothing: The Axis and the Holocaust 1941–1943* (New York, 1990).

stoss — a Wagnerian term that the translation “stab-in-the-back” only inadequately conveys — a legend that traduced the truth and engendered the deepest discord. Resentments fed German intransigence, a self-destructive *Trotzigkeit*. Germany had become a country in which the legacy of the war exacerbated every intellectual and material conflict — of which there were many.

Is it odd that our century, in which the power of individuals to shape history has been so terrifyingly demonstrated, should also be the century in which historians have mocked the notion that individuals matter. If Hitler had been killed in the Great War, the world would have been different. It has often been said that Hitler’s success depended on his being underestimated — a statement both true and explicable. Rational people assumed that the rage and violence he spewed forth were vulgarities with which to attract a crowd; pure evil — his nihilism — they could not understand. Marxists were doctrinally incapable of understanding the movement he inspired, which by its pseudo-religious, paramilitary appearance satisfied psychological, not material, needs. They thought of Hitler as the paid agent of capitalism, a doctrinal misjudgment that was later enshrined as orthodoxy in the German Democratic Republic.

The astounding thing is that Hitler was quite candid about his ideas. *Mein Kampf* was an explicit account of them. The war and subsequent defeat had confirmed the misfit’s experience: war was a communal escape from loneliness, defeat was the work of traitors and racial enemies. Providence had chosen him as the redeemer of his people. He sought absolute power to fulfill that destiny and to escape the empty self. His chief weapon was directly born of his wartime experience: he had imbibed a fanatical faith in the power of propaganda, as practiced, he thought, by the British. *Mein Kampf* was a manual on how to mobilize the German public so that it would rally to his vision of violence and deliverance. Propaganda had to be simple and endlessly repetitive; simple slogans would identify enemies and promise greatness.

The masses with their “feminine” mentality would respond to emotions, never to reason or nuanced judgments. Truth —always complex —was utterly irrelevant; what mattered was igniting people’s passions. As orator (and the spoken word, according to Hitler, was the most successful instrument of propaganda) needed to reach people’s instincts.

Hitler and his immediate underlings were masters of propaganda, amazing choreographers of hate. Their message was simple: all suffering came from the November criminals, from Marxists and Jews who had stabbed a victorious army in the back; the greatest danger to Germandom was Jewry, the mortal racial enemy. The promises of the Third Reich were also simple: absolute authority; the regeneration of the Reich and the extrusion of the Jews; a genuine national community that would break the fetters of Versailles, find new *Lebensraum*, and forever destroy Jewish Bolshevism. Hitler’s violence was manifest in the party’s provocative parades of uniformed men with flags, daggers, and truncheons, singing inflammatory songs and shouting murderous threats.

Once in power, National Socialism was incredibly swift in establishing totalitarian rule. *Gleichschaltung* (coordination) implied conformity and the organized elimination of all opposition, but it also dramatized the achievements of the regime: economic recovery, order and discipline, and an aggressive foreign policy (aggressive in style *and* substance) that successfully defied the existing order. *Gleichschaltung* also demanded acceptance of a mendacious orthodoxy, and most members of the German elites found forms of accommodation with it. Tacitly they accepted the extrusion of Jews, tacitly they accepted the “legal” suspension of all law —and hence the SA cellars of torture and the carefully erected concentration camps, the existence of which was proclaimed in March 1933 —to intimidate.

The initial victims were Germans themselves —Communists and Socialists, and Jews if they happened to fall into these categories. If Germans could torture and murder Germans, would

they show restraint in dealing with non-Germans? And yet the National Socialists also maintained a deceptive normality, at least until *Kristallnacht* in 1938. Success that seduced and mendacity that was shielded by terror help to explain why Hitler's regime in the prewar years was probably the most popular in modern German history.

The National Socialists had their foreign sympathizers, though interestingly they had no label to identify them, no analogue to "fellow-travelers." But many people outside Germany were as vulnerable to Hitler's promises and successes as Germans were, and they too admired the man of destiny, the strong and triumphant leader. Some foreigners were more vulnerable than others: the propertied, those of the Right, technocrats, people disillusioned with democracy and anxiously struggling with a worldwide depression.

What mattered most in the 1930s was the response of Europe's political elites to Hitler. With diabolical cunning and dizzying speed he defied the restrictions of Versailles and built up a new German army; at every moment of unilateral aggrandizement, he promised them that this was his last demand. The feeble efforts of gullible foreign leaders at defending the status quo only increased his contempt. As he grew stronger, as his demands multiplied, the British adopted a policy they called appeasement, a policy made easier by their willed blindness about the nature of Hitler's regime, by a pervasive fear of war, by their deep-seated anti-Communism. In early September 1938 the British ambassador in Berlin, an arch-appeaser, urged that the British press should "write up Hitler as the apostle of Peace. It would be terribly short-sighted if this is not done."²⁵

In the end appeasement deluded Hitler himself: he assumed that appeasement had become the permanent stance of the British and French, decadent as he thought them to be. In 1940 he briefly hesitated in pushing his campaign against Britain, hoping that the

²⁵ Quoted in A. J. P. Taylor, *Europe: Grandeur and Decline* (Hammersworth, 1967), p. 240.

old appeasers would become defeatists (as many did) and come to terms with him. He misjudged the embattled hold that Churchill, that magnificent antiappeaser, had on his nation.

The Second World War was the climax of what I call the Second Thirty Years' War, a climax of unimaginable horror. This time the war began with the ideological fanaticism that had been spawned by the First World War. This time noncombatants suffered at least as much as soldiers; it was a total war almost from the start.

In one year Hitler's *Wehrmacht* —adjudged the best fighting force of the century —conquered most of continental Europe. But even in conquest, the Germans implicitly acknowledged the tragic difference between East and West Europe. In the West, after the Germans routed the French in a matter of weeks, the conquerors behaved with confident correctness —for a while. In the East, the German ideology dictated a different conduct. The Germans had been told that Poles and Russians were *Untermenschen* and should be treated accordingly. Just before the invasion of the Soviet Union, the High Command's infamous Commissar Decree ordered instant brutality, demanding that the army carry out a murderous occupation. Hatred and the fear that such aggression visits upon itself turned Germany's occupation in the East to such horror that Russians and Ukrainians who had initially greeted the Germans as liberators turned into fierce defenders of the Russian motherland. The war broke all restraints.

The greatest injury of all was the systematic extermination of six million Jews —an act of such fanatical hatred so systematically organized that even now we cannot grasp it. Thousands upon thousands took an active part in the Holocaust; even more were passively complicitous. And yet there were those who risked their lives rescuing individual Jews. This was a German crime with countless European accomplices. It was the ultimate measure of terror and mendacity. The victims should be mourned and remembered: their memory should be sacrosanct; it should never be exploited.

As the Wehrmacht conquered Europe and until its aura of invincibility was shattered at Stalingrad in 1943, a fair number of Europeans — in Western Europe and in a few places in Eastern Europe — believed in Hitler's New Order. I am thinking not solely of active collaborators or those who enlisted in Hitler's legions, but also of people who accepted the skillful propaganda for the New Europe and who succumbed to the appeal of power, order, and violence that Germans had succumbed to earlier. They, too, listened to their rationalizations and made their gestures of accommodation. We forget how deeply split the conquered countries were, how deeply even a neutral country like Switzerland was split. German atrocities and deportations disabused some of the sympathizers; German defeats disabused most. In the end, I suspect, most people forgot their earlier aberrations.

The war ended when Americans and Russians met at the Elbe, when the Allies finally crushed Nazism. In that era of 1914–1945 the number of people killed was greater than the total population of Europe had been two centuries earlier. With the end of Nazism, the Western world — or most of it — embraced another hope that turned to illusion; this time it was the hope that the Grand Alliance would survive the defeat of the common enemy, that the celebrated comradeship in war (never easy, never trusting) would endure in some kind of partnership in peace. But before long an old conflict reemerged and decades of violence and untruth had yet to be endured.

I want to be brief about Europe in the post-1945 period, because in some ways that age is better known and also because we lack distance from that epoch, lying as it does somewhere between memory and history. I hope that historians, freed from orthodoxy, with access to hitherto closed archives, will gradually gain a more nuanced sense of the last decades. In time the links between the post-1945 and the pre-1914 periods should become clearer, as, I hope, will the links between the visible changes in the interna-

tional scene and the subterranean changes, especially in Eastern Europe.

In the postwar Europe of 1945–1948, devastated as it was, with many millions hungry, homeless, and on some desperate trek for shelter, there was hope nevertheless —hope that after the horrors of war and Fascism there would be peace and reconstruction, that the Grand Alliance would hold, that the United Nations would strengthen the world order. Many people hoped that some kind of moral compatibility between the Western powers and the Soviet Union —as hinted at by the Nuremberg trials —could become a political reality. For that hope, much truth was sacrificed: for example, we did not want to know the full extent of Soviet barbarism in their liberation of Germany—something that Lev Kopelev witnessed and for speaking the truth about it suffered years of torment. Only recently have we come to know that the Western powers delivered thousands of Russians against their will into the hands of the Soviet Union. As an aside, let me add that American intelligence, vastly expanded during the Second World War, inherited a legacy of stealth that in subsequent decades brought about frequent battles to protect constitutional rights against the presumed requirements of national security.

The origins of the cold war, controversial from the beginning, may become clearer with the opening of Soviet archives. But I doubt that we will need to abandon our sense that reciprocal fears about military security were conflated with ideological and paranoid fears going back to 1917. Russia and America emerged from the war as —unequal —superpowers, and this fact necessarily intensified their old conflict. Stalin, fearful and ambitious, wished to augment his power by expanding his empire. In the United States the indisputable facts of Soviet espionage and expansionism strengthened the old “red scare” and allowed for politically exploitable fears of “un-American activities” at home. It took a long time to combat the mendacities of a Joseph McCarthy; in that harmful conflict as in subsequent ones, courageous individuals

protecting the rights of free expression demonstrated how vulnerable as well as indispensable a free press is.

In France and Italy, Communists, by virtue of their leading role in the Resistance, had won for themselves a kind of moral rehabilitation, Americans did not understand how a quarter or a third of French and Italian voters could support the Communist parties, which prescribed a line that rarely and then only minimally deviated from Moscow's orthodoxy. Among intellectuals a significant, if gradually shrinking, band of sympathizers remained: Jean-Paul Sartre can serve as the best exemplar of that group. They would criticize particular acts of horror —the Czech coup in 1948, the subsequent show trials, the crushing of the Hungarian revolt in 1956 —but they would shut their minds to the notion that the “excesses” were also the essence of the regime, and thus they continued the willed self-deception that had favored Bolshevism from the beginning. (The full horror of indigenous Communist torture in the satellite countries is only now being fully, gruesomely documented. In the first two decades after the war the Communist regimes set out to crush whatever resistance, real or potential, they encountered, resorting to the most inhuman forms of degradation.) A growing American presence in Western Europe —as witness the Marshall Plan —added to the ideological conflict; Communists and left-wing intellectuals tried to exploit the ever-present anti-Americanism, the antagonism against what was called the “Coca-Colonization” of Europe. In his recent book, *Past Imperfect*, Tony Judt has given a devastating analysis of “the political irresponsibility” of so many French intellectuals.²⁶

But during and after the fratricidal wars the idea of “Europe” was born or reborn. In the underground papers and manifestos of the French and Italian Resistance, hopes for a unified democratic Europe were first expressed. Altiero Spinelli, in Italian captivity, envisioned a new Europe; the great architects of the postwar order in Western Europe, Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman, did not

²⁶ Tony Judt, *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals, 1944–1946* (Berkeley, 1992).

want the fatality of a divided and nationalistic Europe to reappear. The cornerstone of the Europe they foresaw rested on the reconciliation between France and Germany, slowly achieved, and finally crowned in the great symbolic (and religious) moment when Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer celebrated mass together at the Cathedral of Rheims in 1962.

This Europe of hope, of spiritual regeneration, enjoyed a period of unprecedented economic growth and social transformation. It was a time of rising standards of living, of a democratic consumerism that survived all manner of setbacks and oil shocks. The French call them the thirty glorious years — and in them the class divisions were much attenuated. The European Community, subject to all kinds of vicissitudes, facilitated Western Europe's march to prosperity and to a measure of political cooperation. As the Europe of Brussels grew beyond its original six members and sought to give greater meaning to "Community," it began to think of itself as Europe *tout court*, presumptuous in its self-assessment, comfortably parochial, and in some measure oblivious of the fact that it was but a part of Europe. There were, of course, important exceptions: the practitioners of *Ostpolitik* acted out of a combination of genuine fraternal concern and *raison d'état*. The many people in France and elsewhere who kept up contacts with East European intellectuals and artists contributed in ways that have yet to be honored fully to the eventual reunification of Europe. The myth of Europe was a powerful magnet to the nations in search of freedom: I am thinking of Spaniards and Portuguese who overthrew their dictatorships; and Europe '92 contributed importantly to the self-liberation of Eastern Europe.

The enthusiasm for "Europe" was genuine, but the building of a Western European collectivity, beginning with the Schuman Plan in the late 1940s, was cumbersome, and the vision of a European future may have served as a temporary cover for the European past. It was not so much that West European states sought to deny or hide the truth as that the people shared a willed am-

nesia. The Germans talked of the “Stunde Null,” of a total caesura; but despite many courageous voices, people were profoundly reluctant to face the past, to grapple with massive complicity, or to acknowledge the deep continuities in German history that had led to National Socialism. In France we find a similar reluctance, again a kind of taboo, to face the truth about Vichy, to acknowledge the continuities between prewar rightist and anti-semitic views and movements and their triumph under Vichy. The Fifth Republic’s effort to ban Max Ophul’s dramatic film about collaboration and resistance, *Le chagrin et la pitié*, was a clumsy, symbolic effort —in a democracy —to banish a true confrontation with the past.²⁷ Perhaps the stark division between “resisters” and “collaborators” —categories that applied in all the occupied countries of Europe —obstructs a clearer sense of the past, blurs the subtle and terrible ambiguities of the real situation: how only a few were fully committed to one cause or the other, how doubts and misgivings crept in, how people lived and acted in several worlds simultaneously or successively: people alternated, changed with time. In 1940 Hitler’s New Order seemed attractive to some and irresistible to many; after Stalingrad “the wave of the future” receded —and people’s minds adjusted to new realities.

How different the world of Eastern Europe! For decades, the Soviet Union had been isolated and insulated; its borders were sealed, and technology facilitated the insulation —governments could jam foreign broadcasts, for example —even as more recent technology has made such insulation all but impossible.²⁸ The German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 had shown the extraordinary disaffections that existed there, especially among peoples who had a sense of their own ethnic identity, such as the

²⁷ On this, see Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991).

²⁸ The connection between technology and terror has undergone many changes. Access to communications has helped dissidents. Brutal repression can rarely be hidden today; the means of underground publications have also changed.

Ukrainians. I now ask myself whether the Great Patriotic War, as it was dubbed by Stalin and glorified for decades thereafter, did not prolong the life of the Soviet Union: it was the one common memory that legitimized the dictatorship and gave some belated justification for the regime's ruthless drive to industrialize at all costs.

Whatever hopes or illusions existed in the first three years after the end of the war, by 1948 it had become clear that Stalin was determined to consolidate his totalitarian grip over the countries of Eastern Europe. In the wake of the Red Army, Communist regimes were installed, loyal to Stalin and imbued with Stalinist fears of foreign and internal enemies. Huge Communist parties evolved everywhere, as did an all-controlling, privileged *apparat* and eventually the rule of the *nomenklatura*. The nightmare of totalitarian rule now extended from Vladivostok to the Elbe, and the Soviets needed still greater repression to rule over nations that treasured their historic independence. Stalin unleashed yet more terror: the show trials against Rudolf Slansky and Anna Pauker, the doctors' plot, the persecution of bourgeois remnants —the endless lies, the perpetual rewriting of history.

Stalin's death in 1953 marked a caesura in the history of Bolshevism: for the first time in thirty years there was a moment of controlled truth, Nikita Khrushchev's secret speech in 1956 — instantly published in the foreign press, but, as the property of the party, kept from the people —accused Stalin of having instituted a reign of terror, of murdering innocent people. "De-Stalinization" indicted the "cult of personality," thus suggesting that Stalin and not the system was responsible for the horrors hitherto concealed. For all the zigzags of Soviet policy thereafter, and despite the ruthless crushing of the Hungarian and Czech revolts, the full force of Stalinist totalitarianism was not resurrected. "Thaws" would alternate with freezes, but the most brutal forms of systematic, sadistic torture began to give way, though the gulags and psychiatric wards continued. Torture as a habitual instrument of

power began to disappear; deposed rulers, like Khrushchev, were no longer executed.

A kind of degrading, repressive drabness descended over much of the Soviet empire. The regime still claimed that the party had an absolute monopoly on the truth, silencing all criticism and crushing all opposition. A new life, however, sprang up in the underground: it was in bondage that the hunger for freedom was nurtured; it was the ever-present lie that inspired that hunger for truth, the determination “to live in the truth,” to face down the oppressor, to make no compromise. All of this has been told in many stirring accounts; consider as but one poignant example Adam Michnik’s *Letters from Prison*. In the cellars of the Resistance in occupied Europe, a dream of a Europe purged of hate had been born; in the underground of repressive Communist regimes, courageous and incorruptible men and women depicted the ambiguities of life under declining totalitarianism —with an astounding compassion. To recall but a few names —Václav Havel and Adam Michnik, Efim Etkind and Czeslaw Milosz, Jury Afanassjew and Andrei Sakharov—is to remember this deep outcry against untruth, this revulsion against the lying society with its rewards for compliance and its demands for soul-destroying compromises. This was still a time when the two parts of Europe were divided and estranged from one another, but I think it was also a time when the poorer half developed a richer sense of what Europe meant or could mean than did the prosperous part.

Gandhi’s philosophy of nonviolence may have been a beacon for some, but many, many people developed a stoic, defiant awareness, in Havel’s words, “of the power of the powerless.” I believe that it was in the countries of Eastern Europe that a new idea of Europe was born, that in the leaders of KOR (Committee for Defense of Workers’ Rights) and of Solidarity, the members of Charter ’77, and the thousands and later the tens of thousands who with incomparable spirit and discipline defied regimes and somehow conquered them morally there was something more

deeply European, more self-consciously European than in voices in Western Europe. At the heart of their lives and doings lies a humane vision that wants to end and yet understand the chain of horrors that began with the terror of 1914.

In conclusion I wish to repeat what I said at the beginning: in 1989 this chain of horrors was broken. I do not believe that we have reached the end of history or a surcease of conflicts; the passions of primordial untruth and violence, hatreds, and nationalist intolerance are dangers that have already overwhelmed some of the recent achievements. But I do believe we have reached the end of an era when Europe was wracked by hegemonial wars, made worse by new means of destruction, when these wars exacerbated the social and national conflicts that bred or shaped them, when the utopian visions of totalitarian regimes enthralled and enslaved millions, and when these totalitarian states amassed a monopoly of power that also controlled a monopoly of truth,

The terrible era behind us —and the astounding four years since 1989—have once again taught us the unpredictability of events. Still, I would venture to say that in Europe today there is —perhaps for the first time in its modern history —a presumption for peace. Perhaps there is even a presumption against soldiers shooting their fellow-citizens —despite the horrors in what used to be Yugoslavia.

The leaders of self-liberation of Eastern Europe had to fight specific, local enemies and ensconced *apparatchiki*; they rejected violence and untruth. Once in power, they started a new and different chain: on behalf of their nations, they offered formal apologies for injuries done to other nationalities or countries; hands have been stretched out in reconciliation. Skeptics may scoff that these were mere words —as if the whole preceding era had not proven the power of words and symbols. But even skeptics must acknowledge that the gestures of reconciliation were followed by definitive treaties; the German-Polish Treaty, for example, aimed at ending centuries of brutal conflict. Treaties have been supple-

mented or complemented by unprecedented, if still insufficient, efforts at regional cooperation.

The process of reconciliation has its entrenched opponents, including powerful remnants of the old *apparat*. Nationalism — which has always had its emancipatory and its brutal, aggressive sides — may be moving in the latter direction. Patriotism inspired the liberators, but xenophobia and violence are ever-present.

I believe historians have a particular responsibility at this point — and I say this knowing full well that our collective impact has diminished. We are at the threshold of a new era in which “the white spots of history,” as they are called in Russia, have a chance of being filled. As archives are opened, as historians become unfettered, there are immense opportunities, yet what obstacles. Powerful interests will want to prevent disclosures that would document their complicity or the falseness of so much that went under the name of history.²⁹ We need to remember that the revolutions of 1989 marked the victory of those who believed in the rule of law, in free speech, in representative government, in the open society. As party orthodoxies and lies about the past are destroyed, old myths might newly emerge: to topple Lenin in order to celebrate Nicholas II is but an alternation in myth-making. The same would be true if Bolshevik ideology were replaced by Russian nationalism or Ukrainian antisemitism; a world controlled by the Stasi must not be replaced by a society intimidated by roaming skinheads.

This is not a time of triumphalism for capitalism; true, the free market has proven its far greater efficiency than the controlled economy, but it has its own deficiencies. Despite reforms, there is little evidence that a free or unregulated capitalist system can satisfy human needs for security or justice. Men and women have died for truth, freedom, and dignity — but have they died for capitalism? As Communism collapsed, the United States offered a

²⁹ On this, see the moving essay by Juri Afanassjew, “Das beschädigte Gedächtnis,” *Transit: Europäische Revue* (Summer 1991), 110–20.

distressing example of what harm unleashed greed can create. The immense human, moral, and material costs of Reaganite free-market euphoria have only just been acknowledged. The balance between the needs of the free market and the claims of social justice are always in dispute, always in need of political adjustment. For some people it has proven ideologically profitable to declare the identity of Bolshevism and Socialism. But Bolshevism was a perversion of Socialism, and Democratic Socialism has helped to humanize capitalism, to keep it alive. The Socialist impulse has been a useful irritant to capitalist insouciance.

For all the risks and dangers ahead, for all the reminders of how vulnerable people are to myths and illiberal promises, we should recognize the magnitude of the changes that have come to Europe with the revolutions of 1989. Truth has been vindicated. The value of liberal institutions and of a liberal spirit have reappeared, not with any kind of fanfare, but perhaps “as self-evident truths,” as they first appeared to the framers of the American Declaration of Independence. Perhaps we are returning to some of the values of the eighteenth century, of the Enlightenment, of a moment in Europe that has been called the “Discovery of Liberty.” The Defense of Liberty is our next task.

II

My second lecture deals with a short and very recent period, focusing on postunification Germany. I suppose I could justify this effort simply by saying that German developments are at once unique and symptomatic of developments in Eastern Europe and that Germany's place in Europe is central. But I take additional comfort from what two colleagues from this distinguished university have said. As Hajo Holborn wrote, "There can be no question that history must be interpreted as an evolution, of which our present age is a mere part. If so, we should make every effort to relate the history of the past to our present vital concerns and try in particular to recover the knowledge about the day before yesterday that has slipped from living memory and not been caught by the professional historian."¹ And as C. Vann Woodward has said — and exemplifies in his life — "since the historian lives in the present he has obligations to the present as well as to the past he studies."² What happened the day before yesterday does touch on our present vital concerns — hence my effort to put that period in some historical perspective.

We all remember the euphoria that the breaching of the Berlin wall created: the world saw an event — an improvised event — that had the deepest symbolic and dramatic meaning: on November 9, 1989, in Berlin a people were let out of some kind of prison in a scene reminiscent of the prisoners coming out into sunlight at the end of *Fidelio*, and it was altogether appropriate that a few weeks later Leonard Bernstein conducted an orchestra of East and West German musicians performing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony

¹ Hajo Holborn, *The Political Collapse of Europe* (New York, 1951), p. vi.

² C. Vann Woodward, *Thinking Back: The Perils of Writing History* (Baton Rouge and London, 1986), p. 98.

to celebrate. He substituted the word “freedom” (*Freiheit*) for “joy” (*Freude*) in the Schiller poem sung in the last movement, and for a fleeting moment the two were paired. It is the rupture of that union that has become my text for today.

In an immediate sense, the breach of the wall was an accident: in the confused turmoil of early November 1989 during which the Communist leaders of East Germany realized that they were confronting uncontrollable developments, a Cabinet minister read an ambiguous announcement to the press that suggested a forthcoming relaxation of travel restrictions. Within minutes, a few demoralized guards along the wall allowed a trickle of people to pass into West Berlin, an early trickle that in the next days became a human flood. It was an accident that was validated by the sweep of history.

We should realize a further ironic, ominous accident: in the Germany of our century no other day of the year has seen such momentous events as November 9. In 1918, on that day, masses of Germans, hungry, war-weary, and enraged, took to the streets and overthrew their imperial and imperialist rulers. That revolution, however incomplete, frightened the old elites, but essentially it left them intact, and most of them came to feel a sullen homelessness in the new Weimar Republic. In subsequent disasters, some of these elites saw Hitler as a possible redeemer, the same Hitler who on November 9, 1923, attempted to overthrow the democratic Weimar Republic —the failed putsch that first gave him national notoriety. Some nine years later he became chancellor of Germany and embarked on a course of measured violence; on November 9, 1938, *Kristallnacht*, Hitler unleashed his fury against the Jews — in full view of his people. Why liberation on so ambiguous a day?

No one had predicted the drama of that summer and fall of 1989 in Central Europe, and few people anticipated that the euphoria would soon yield to disillusion. (An American social scientist has been quoted as saying, “None of us predicted these events,

and all of us could explain why they were inevitable.”) In discussing the aftermath of that euphoria, I would cite as an epigraph something that Heinrich Heine wrote in 1831 in his exile in Paris: “It is a peculiar matter with patriotism, with the real love for the fatherland. One can love one’s fatherland and get to be 80 years old and never have known that love; but then one would have had to remain at home. The nature of spring one recognizes only in winter, and it is behind the oven that one writes the best spring poems. The love for freedom is a dungeon’s flower and only in jail does one feel the value of freedom. Thus love for the German fatherland begins only at the German border, but principally when seeing German misfortune from abroad.”³

The opening of the Berlin wall was a climax of processes that had begun elsewhere in Europe, that found indispensable support in Mikhail Gorbachev’s Soviet Union, and that finally brought East Germany close to a revolutionary situation. In October 1989, on the fortieth birthday of the DDR, Gorbachev had warned, “Life punishes those who come too late.” He hoped that in East Germany as elsewhere in the crumbling Soviet imperium, party leaders would move to a liberalized Communism, would stage “a revolution from above,” marked by *glasnost*’ and *perestroika*. But he also made it clear that if the East German regime were to use violence against its people, Soviet troops would stay in their barracks.

In the early fall of 1998 the East German state was in danger of withering away, as thousands of its citizens found their way to West Germany, as millions had done before the wall had been built in 1961. They reached West Germany —where by law they instantly received citizenship —via the accommodating corridor of Hungary’s opened borders and by crowding into the West German embassy in Prague, whence they were taken through DDR territory to the Federal Republic. At the same time, an ever growing number of their compatriots took to the streets demanding

³ Heinrich Heine, “Vorrede zum ersten Bande des ‘Salon’” (1833), in *Sammtliche Werke* (Hamburg, 1876), vol. 14, pp. 44–45.

greater freedom and a more humane existence under the memorable slogan “We are the people” —as against the lie of forty years that the party represented the people. These marches showed admirably planned restraint —and still required great courage. After all, the thugs in the Politburo who had practiced repression for decades still had the means of emulating the butchery of Tiananmen Square, which but a short time before they had officially welcomed. They had the means but, at the decisive moment, no longer the will. We now know that the regime was in fact readying new internment camps, that, anticipating violence, it had sent extra blood supplies to local hospitals on the day of the greatest demonstration in Leipzig, October 9. At the last moment bold local leaders, including Kurt Masur, persuaded the powers to parley and not to shoot. After that, the people of East Germany dictated the pace, the streets decreed the agenda, and the Communist leaders hobbled behind.

At the same time oppositional groups emerged, such as the Civic Forum, demanding free elections and an end to Communist rule. I doubt that most of the leading dissidents or their followers had the unification of Germany in mind. In the beginning they hoped that the DDR could be turned into a social-democratic state, could find the fabled third way between Communism and capitalism, in some union with the bigger brother. Belatedly the regime lurched toward compromise, pressed from below. Honecker was replaced by a younger but no less compromised leader, Egon Krenz, who much too late was replaced by Hans Modrow, at the time a politician with the reputation of a true reformer. All the while the exodus to the West continued —and the specter of East Germany becoming a kind of prison house for the aged began to haunt Germans of both East and West.

The DDR regime agreed to hold free elections —and instantly the major West German parties sent money and experienced organizers to the East. They found indigenous leaders, of course —but relatively few; much of whatever reservoir of political talent

might have existed in East Germany had chosen at an earlier time to emigrate to the West. For multiple reasons —to which I shall return —the potential for East German leadership was feeble, certainly feeble as compared to that in Poland or Czechoslovakia, and it was easily overwhelmed by the well-schooled and well-financed influx of West German politicians. It gradually became clear that even the most attractive of the East German leaders had complicated, in some instances compromised, pasts. In the election held in March 1990, a replica of the CDU triumphed, and the appealing Lothar de Mazière became the first non-communist minister-president of the DDR, destined as well to be the last. As the Communist state disintegrated, his task was to negotiate the demise of the DDR.

With the disappearance of the wall and the threat of a mass exodus from East Germany, it was clear that a German solution had to be found speedily. The East German proletariat demanded capitalism —and at once. Kohl seized the moment and with somnambulist skill exploited a favorable international constellation. Backed by the United States, the one ally cheerfully distant from Germany, Kohl began the 2+4 negotiations that resulted in the United States, France, Britain, and the Soviet Union agreeing to a unified Germany that would be free to remain in NATO and remain integrated in the West. Kohl paid heavy ransom to the Soviets to make the unpalatable at least swallowable. He defied his own Bundesbank, decreeing a 1:1 exchange rate with the much weaker East Mark. And he negotiated a treaty with de Mazière, whereby the reconstituted *Länder* of the DDR would join the Federal Republic —alongside the old *Länder*, and with the same rights.

This near miracle was achieved on October 3, 1990, the formal sanctioning of what Willy Brandt had celebrated a year earlier: “What belongs together grows together.” This was not a moment of German triumphalism; it was not even a victory of German nationalism. Economic aspirations dictated the pace, not ideological fervor. That unification would bring immense challenges was

clear of course; in June 1990 I remarked to de Mazière that I thought that the economic problems of unification, though huge, would turn out to be manageable, but that the moral-psychological problems would be far greater and their resolution take much longer. He agreed, saying, “Yes, we do not want 16 million psychological cripples.” Many West Germans, especially Oskar Lafontaine and some of his Social Democratic colleagues, warned about the likely costs of unification, but Chancellor Kohl exuded insouciance, a profitable stance in an election year. Thus he missed the chance to ask of West Germans sacrifices for their long-lost brothers and sisters — who had really paid for Hitler’s war. Had he done so there would have been a willing response; but Churchillian “blood and sweat” demands come hard to German leaders; they are afraid of their own people — they don’t trust them.

Such has been the pace of events that much has already been forgotten or distorted about the events of 1989–1990. While the two states existed, Germans could believe in the unity of their nation, of a people with a common language and a common past, in Honecker’s phrase, a people with a community of fate. Now, within one state, the deep divisions among Germans are more visible. No doubt there is truth in Freud’s words about “the narcissism of small differences” that divides neighbors and family members,⁴ yet in 1989 there was an expectation that Germans would understand Germans. In the first flush of enthusiasm people forgot the estrangements that had grown so strong over forty years, as West Germans came to regard the French or the Tuscans or the Dutch as closer, and perhaps more attractive, to them than the East Germans. For their part, the East Germans lived with a prescribed if gradually attenuated hostility to the Federal Republic, and with a nonprescribed envy and resentment of its freedom and prosperity, which they witnessed nightly on their television screens. Visitors to East Germany could sense this estrangement;

⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Gesammelte Werke, Werke aus den Jahren 1917–1920* (London, 1947), vol. 12, p. 169.

I sensed it myself when I visited both Germanies in 1954 and very frequently after that. And in the Federal Republic, for all the ritualistic invocations of German solidarity, for all the many individuals who did genuinely care about their fellow-Germans in the East, one sensed an enormous, unacknowledged indifference to them. Sudden commonality, sudden huge demands, did not instantly transform indifference to open-hearted solicitude.

In a general way, some of the turbulence was predictable; as the process of unification was under way and not only Iron Ladies worried about a new hegemonial Germany, I repeatedly asserted my confidence that even a unified Germany would not pose a threat to peace or stability, always adding that “the first test of the new Germany would be how Germans treat Germans” —and I said that in part out of the recollection that the first victims of Hitler’s regime had been Germans —Socialists, Communists, and other political enemies. Once Germans had tortured and murdered fellow-Germans in the cellars of the SA, would one expect that they would treat their avowed enemies — whether Jews or, later, Slavs —with any humanity ?

Second, the new Germany was facing an enormous economic challenge: the rebuilding of a devastated third of the country. For years we had been told that the East German economy was the eighth or tenth largest in the world; it looked as if Germans could make even Communism work. But the DDR’s putative success was a case of the one-eyed leading the blind; by the 1980s its entire economy was in a free fall; even the regime had lost hope, and the country came to depend on ever greater subsidies, both hidden and open, from the Federal Republic. The regime was consuming its own stock, living off its antiquated, minimal accumulation. With the revolutions in Eastern Europe, the DDR’s ready market in the Comecon countries disappeared; East German industry could not compete with the superior industrial and consumer goods produced in West Germany, perhaps the world’s most efficient economy. None of the other liberated countries of the former Soviet

bloc faced such competition within their own borders, and none had a big brother who in the process of helping out took charge. The Germans had to dismantle a bankrupt system that had maintained full employment by sanctioning low productivity, and this meant instant dislocations, harsh measures, and inevitably resentments and recriminations. Add to these dislocations the claims of West Germans — and of former Germans now living in the United States and elsewhere — who claimed restitution of property that had been expropriated by the Nazi or DDR regime. Almost at once East Germans felt endangered — and exploited, forgetting the old adage that if there is one thing worse than being exploited it is *not* being exploited.

Marc Bloch, the great historian of socioeconomic life, once remarked that all historical facts are psychological, and I invoke his words to justify my particular focus on the psychology of this process.⁵ I believe that both Germanies gained greater, if sharply different, kinds of freedom after unification — and with that freedom came new uncertainties and discontents. In the East it was the freedom from the knock at the door, freedom to travel, release from a regimented, intimidating, false existence, freedom to examine one's life. But almost immediately 17 million East Germans discovered that freedom also meant freedom to face an uncertain future, freedom to lose a job, to lose support nets, however inadequate they may have been. For forty years most East Germans had accommodated themselves to life in a world of public lies and private doubts. Totalitarian regimes mobilize people into passive participation in politics. After twelve years of Nazi rule and forty years of Communist rule they may have survived psychologically by practicing denial, by wishing not to see. Friedrich Nietzsche, in one of his most extravagant attacks on Germans, held them responsible for all manner of crimes against European culture “and always for the same reason, out of their innermost *cowardice* before reality, which is also their cowardice before truth, out of their

⁵ Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (New York, 1953), p. 194.

untruthfulness which has become instinctual with them, out of ‘Idealism.’”⁶

After 1989 avoiding reality became impossible, given the economic dislocations of transforming a dysfunctional, decaying command economy into a market economy — as if there was but one type of market economy. The closing of state-run enterprises led to mounting unemployment. Consider the magic word “privatization” — the term in its strict sense signifying the process whereby state property is placed in multiple private hands; in the East German case, this often enough meant Western hands. But economic affairs were only part of what had been prescribed under the earlier command economy; so much of life had been lived in the public realm, ordered from above or by inherited routine. That kind of society left little room for choice, for private initiative, for any kind of voluntary *civisme*. Suddenly the East Germans were released from this nonage, from public control, and had to learn to make their own choices, think their own thoughts, find their own truths. They were indeed “privatized” at a time when the associational life of a civil society was being but slowly introduced.

Market economies presuppose legal structures, a system of private and public law — a legal code that has to be taught, learned, and gradually assimilated. The art of evasion is also practiced in market economies — as the 1980s so vividly illustrate. Western enthusiasts for the free market in the former DDR often ignored the social costs of the transformation. Worse, the abrupt introduction of new forms of economic life also created what sociologists (and Marxists) have long identified with modern capitalism: alienation, *anomie*, insecurity. For the East Germans, the move from the rigid world of Communist rule to the demands of a mobile society was hard. The very notion of “planning” for a market economy had an ironic ring to it. A new dependency developed: much of life in the eastern *Länder* came to be organized

⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke in drei Bänden, Ecce Homo*, ed. by Karl Schlechta (Munich: 1955), vol. 2, p. 1147.

by Westerners, who were practiced in making decisions, in making things work, in assessing the risks of the market, and who had the skills and the funds to take charge. East Germans had been taught to live and work by plans that bore little relation to reality; they had learned to suffer and endure but not to take responsibility or to live by trial and error.

East Germans hoped that the end of Communism would bring instant rehabilitation as well as instant improvement in their living standard. But soon they began to think they were being “colonized” —a word used commonly that was infuriating to Western ears. (Even before formal unification, I thought of the analogy to Northern carpetbaggers after the Civil War: were the East Germans going to endure something similar to the experience of the defeated South in the era of Reconstruction? In his history of Reconstruction, Eric Foner writes, “Most carpetbaggers probably combined the desire for personal gain with a commitment to reforming the “unprogressive” South . . .”⁷) Defeated, humiliated, more object than subject, many East Germans expressed their disappointment in terms of self-pity and resentment. Was there no end to their being victimized? In the early years of occupation the Russians had dismantled and taken what had been left of German industrial plants in their zone; a current scholarly estimate is that the Russians extracted some 54 billion D-Marks in reparations — all this while the western zones and later the FRG received Marshall Plan aid.⁸ Of course the balance sheet is far more complicated: on the one hand, the West Germans also benefited from the huge influx of refugees from the Soviet zone and of Germans expelled by Poles and Czechs; on the other hand, Bonn did make restitution payments to Israel and gradually gave support to East Germany. But East Germans believed, with some justification, that they had paid disproportionately for Hitler’s war.

⁷ Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction* (New York, 1988), p. 130.

⁸ Jörg Fisch, *Reparationen nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Munich, 1992), as quoted in *Die Zeit*, January 8, 1993.

After 1990 both East and West Germans had to consider their separate and joint pasts. Former DDR citizens had to address questions that have beset other countries at other times in our century: questions of collaboration and collusion, of culpability and trustworthiness. Which of them were so compromised that they could no longer be teachers or judges, civil servants or plant managers, professors or members of renowned academies? Who was to make these judgments —and on what basis?

West Germans, hardly at peace with their own past, were ready to make their judgments about Easterners. From the moment of unification I was concerned that the West Germans would be far more cheerfully, self-righteously assiduous in punishing suspected collaborators with the Communist regime than their forbears had been in dealing with servants of the Nazi regime. The very popularity of that regime had made de-Nazification difficult. Even now West Germans with an undetected compromised past continue to flourish; a prominent West German physician recently was forced to resign from a major post in an international organization because it was revealed that he had participated in the Nazis' euthanasia program. The Nazi past divides West Germans still, as shown by the controversy surrounding President Reagan's visit to Bitburg in 1985, by the *Historikerstreit*, and by the decades it has taken to document the complicity of the German army in atrocities on the Eastern front. To this day many Germans, in and out of uniform, choose to believe in the *Wehrmacht's* innocence. We should remember that National Socialism never needed a wall; there was never a threat of a mass exodus. By comparison, millions of East Germans voted with their feet. Under the Nazis an indeterminate number of Germans had gone into "inner emigration," tried to remain insulated, to purchase peace at the price of silence. West Germans who were confounded by this past —and divided among themselves about it— were now called upon to judge fellow-Germans who had lived for a further forty years under a totalitarian regime initially held in place by foreign bayonets.

Most East Germans knew that their leaders, piously mouthing peace, had believed in violence and had no mercy. What they could not have known (because the tape was released only in February 1993) was that in February 1982 Erich Mielke, head of the Stasi, had told his closest colleagues that to save the lives of millions one might have to kill a bandit: "All this drivel about not executing and no death sentences, all crap, comrades."⁹ The tone does remind one of Nazi evil. In the post-Stalinist era East German leaders, like leaders throughout the Soviet bloc, sought to replace torture with other kinds of intimidation, including the abomination of psychiatric wards. Party leaders ordered monstrous crimes: they ordered alleged enemies of the regime to be tortured, incarcerated, or shot; they organized espionage and initiated or facilitated international terrorism. But these same leaders after 1970 and especially in the 1980s garnered official recognition by other states: Chancellor Kohl received them in Bonn; Franz Joseph Strauss visited them and arranged for the DDR to receive a 1 billion DM credit. West German Social Democrats collaborated with functionaries of the East German Communist Party to hammer out a joint paper defining areas of agreement and disagreement. Today Honecker is free in Chile and only a few frontier guards are in prison, while tens of thousands of teachers and other East German civil servants have been suspended or dismissed.

As the Communist regime crumbled, East Germans, left in their crowded, drab, decaying dwellings, ill-lit and ill-equipped, saw pictures of how the *nomenklatura* had lived in insulated comfort, and they read about the perquisites that ranged from special medical care to Swiss bank accounts. Had they really not noticed before that the much-touted egalitarianism of the first German Socialist state had been traduced daily, visibly and invisibly? The *apparatchiki* had their own Volvos, their children had privileged

⁹ Quoted in announcement of Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, February 16, 1993.

access to education, and all of them could shop in the Intershops where Western goods could be bought for Western currency. The revelations of the extent of these special benefits — petty by Western standards — enraged many East Germans: they felt betrayed. They remembered the leaders' endless invocations that, unlike the rapacious capitalist West, the DDR was an egalitarian society where austerity and sacrifice provided a psychological guarantee of a better future. But they must have had at least an inkling that their leaders had not practiced the virtues of delayed gratification that they had preached.

The resultant outburst sprang from what I think was the East Germans' ambivalence about deprivation. They minded it, of course, but they may have felt that austerity was virtuous — in old Germanic terms, ennobling. To have stark proof that their leaders had mocked this notion was offensive. In this largely Lutheran country, was this a distant echo of Martin Luther's attacks on a Roman hierarchy that preached poverty but lived in corrupt luxury?

The East Germans were made to realize something far worse: their insidious, malevolent regime had managed to entrap vast numbers of them in collusion and corruption. The state security police had organized an unprecedented web of surveillance. In its final days the Stasi consisted of 97,000 full-time employees — with perhaps as many as 140,000 IMs (unofficial collaborators), most of whom had acknowledged their commitment in writing. Only the “higher” ranks of society, such as professors or members of elite academies, were allowed to register their agreement orally. In addition, membership in the Communist Party rose to 2 million people, who were particularly vulnerable to Stasi demands. All this machinery for 17 million Germans — while the Gestapo, helped by countless voluntary informers, at the end of the Nazi regime had only 32,000 members for 80 million Germans.¹⁰ The

¹⁰ Interview with Pastor Joachim Gawk, special chairman of the organization listed in note 9, May 6, 1993. On the Gestapo, see Robert Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy 1933–1945* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 44–46, 253–61.

Stasi files — 150 kilometers of them — offered poisonous proof of a poisoned society.

The Stasi were the eyes and ears of a regime deeply distrustful of its own people. Born of distrust, the Stasi became an agent of distrust. An earlier Tanner lecturer, Annette Baier, talked of the centrality of trust.¹¹ In a repressive society like the DDR, the desire for trust was great; reaching out for it, fraught with danger. In a world without laws or enforceable rights, a person searches for the like-minded, for another person to talk to, if need be in some outside place where surveillance is more difficult. West German observers thought that East Germans had managed to have closer, more trusting relationships in what they called a niche society. Some East Germans probably did have a particular affinity for trust and friendship; they invested in them as rare human goods at a time of moral scarcity. Imagine, then, the shock, the retroactive dissolution of trust, when one discovered that one's friend had been an informer, that husbands informed on their wives, wives on husbands, parents on children, friends on friends. Even now, as more information is divulged, the web of suspicion spreads ever wider.

During the 1970s, when the East German regime gradually replaced physical terror with calculated intimidation, the Stasi, like other secret police, learned to play with fiendish aptitude on people's vulnerabilities, operating an ever more elaborate system of carrots and sticks. The rewards for being an unofficial collaborator varied: career advancement, travel to the West; the sticks were more formidable, often involving the punishment of children for the alleged sins of their parents. The Stasi also resorted to more lethal methods, such as efforts to bring about "personal destabilization," including undermining marriages — a whole array of Iago-like villainies aimed at destroying trust among friends and potential critics.

¹¹ Annette C. Baier, "Trust," in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, vol. 13, ed. Grethe B. Peterson (Salt Lake City, 1992).

Opposition to the DDR regime was feeble compared to that elsewhere in the Soviet bloc. After the one great outburst of June 17, 1953, when East German workers took to the streets to defy their ever more demanding and repressive regime and were crushed by Soviet tanks, there was apparent conformity. There was no East German equivalent of the repeated uprisings or of the great alliance of workers and intellectuals in Poland's Solidarnosc, or of the Hungarian rebellion of 1956, or of the Czech spring of 1968 and later Charter 77. It has often been said that Germans are somewhat untutored in civic courage; they have the word but not the all-essential practice. Albert Hirschman once wrote of moral resources, including civic spirit and trust, "These are resources whose supply may well increase rather than decrease through use; . . . [they] do not remain intact if they stay unused—like the ability to speak a foreign language or to play the piano, these moral resources are likely to become depleted and to atrophy if not used."¹²

Stasi revelations have threatened some of the most promising political careers in the new *Länder* of the united Germany. Two examples may suffice: Lothar de Mazière, the first vice-chancellor of the unified Germany, resigned when it was said that he had Stasi contacts; and insinuations continue to be made against the only Socialist minister-president in the new *Länder*, Manfred Stolpe of Brandenburg. Stolpe had worked in and with the Protestant churches and had helped them to help victims of the regime. He had regular contacts with the Stasi—how else could he help people entrapped by them? Knowledgeable defenders of Stolpe and others similarly accused insist that any responsible person who tried to help people who had fallen afoul of the regime had to deal with the Stasi. But critics claim that even talking to Stasi officials was the first step on a slippery slope. Others, myself included, might argue that in a tyrannical system only absolute im-

¹²Albert O. Hirschman, *Rival Views of Market Society and Other Recent Essays* (New York, 1986), p. 155.

mobility can protect one from the dangers of that slope. Once upon a time the Stasi oppressed a people; its legacy has been to demoralize them, perhaps to deprive them of the few good political leaders they might have had.

The Ulbricht-Honecker regime, mixing German traditions with Soviet models, had promoted a separate cultural life in the DDR. It had wanted to create athletes of the spirit, writers and artists who could dazzle the outside world and satisfy some aspirations of their own people. As the East German molecular biologist and admirable citizen-thinker Jens Reich makes clear in a new book, the regime sought to implicate the entire *Intelligenz* —technicians as well as poets —and to a devastating degree it was successful.¹³ For many reasons the *samizdat* literature that flourished in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Russia did not exist in the DDR. In the early years of the regime writers like Robert Havemann were imprisoned and gifted irritants like Wolf Biermann were expelled. This last decision prompted East German writers to protest for the first time. But by and large the limits of state tolerance for dissent were rarely if ever tested.

Gradually the demands for socialist realism were relaxed; other kinds of art were allowed. The novelist Christa Wolf was able to depict life in the DDR with some degree of candor. Writers jostled with censors, parodists ventured the occasional mischief, as when the writer Heiner Müller said, “We are the most progressive state ever: 95 percent of the people are against it —such a thing has never happened before,” or when he sang, “The Stasi is my Eckermann.”¹⁴ Now come the revelations that these writers, too, were once part of the Stasi net. In the late 1950s and early 1960s Christa Wolf was an unofficial informant, unbeknownst even to her husband. Decades later she described at length how she too came under Stasi surveillance. As the most

¹³ Jens Reich, *Abschied von den Lebenslügen: Die Intelligenz und die Macht* (Berlin, 1992).

¹⁴ Quoted in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 27, 1992.

prominent and promising of East German writers, she has been denounced and defended. For my purposes, she illustrates how easy it was under that regime to move from being accomplice and perpetrator to victim, how difficult it is for us to judge the conduct of people enmeshed in a system with all these visible and invisible tentacles.

There is at present a great controversy about the conduct of DDR authors and *Intelligenz*. Some West German critics express outrage, and there is a danger that in time the work of these writers might be altogether forgotten. This would be a distortion and a loss: some of them were guarded witnesses to life under dreadful conditions—conditions that did not exist in the old Federal Republic. Now, in the unified Germany, West Germans have assumed a leading role in decision-making, in dismissals and recruitments throughout the eastern *Länder*. Their work is officially subsumed under the term *Abwicklung*. This sanitized bureaucratic term, once used by the Nazis, suggests legal procedures or business liquidations; it bespeaks distance and condescension; it is unattuned to tact or compassion.

The question of judgment is inherently difficult. In the case of many of the accusations against former DDR citizens one must ask: how reliable are the files of the Stasi, and how often were they slanted by inferiors trying to curry favor with their superiors? Finally, as Jens Reich has implicitly warned, the Stasi could easily become a scapegoat for the DDR regime. The greater villains were the party and state functionaries; the Stasi were not autonomous villains, and some of their collaborators may have had mixed or honorable motives. Only the clearest picture of life in the DDR can help to render humane judgments. There may be good reason to sympathize with those West Germans of an impeccable past who say of all these leaks and revelations “Enough” —a reaction that has been much heard in the countries of Eastern Europe.

In the years to come Germans of both East and West will continue to find it difficult to deal with the history of their divided

forty years, of the DDR and the Federal Republic, two entities that lasted almost as long as the Bismarckian Reich. Polemical, divisive arguments have already begun about who supported whom and when, who really promoted unification and who opposed it. Right-wing Germans or newborn nationalists are already accusing the Left of the old Federal Republic of national neglect, of having slighted the goal of national unity, of having collaborated with the SED or of having been “soft” on East German criminals or collaborators. In time, after the calumnies and the memories are extinguished or transformed, later generations may “bracket out” the history of the DDR, as Germans call such a deletion, while finding that it remains hard to expunge the Nazi past, efforts to “relativize” the crimes notwithstanding. As President von Weizsäcker has said, the DDR neither started a war nor committed genocide. It may gradually fade from historical consciousness, be dismissed as a Soviet satellite, an alien excrescence of something called the cold war. The West Germans’ earlier indifference to the DDR would facilitate so convenient a lapse of memory. But the DDR in all its ambiguity needs to be remembered and in some way integrated into the history of Germany and Europe in our century.

The beginnings of the DDR are most likely to be forgotten, the time immediately after the war when in the Soviet zone of occupation a so-called Socialist state was gradually established, expropriating the large estate owners and nationalizing what was left of German industry there. In the baggage train of the conquering Red Army arrived Moscow-trained German Communists—many of whom had earlier been tortured in Nazi camps—determined to forge a union between Socialists and Communists in order to present what they called a great anti-Fascist bloc, a bulwark against what people then thought a plausible contingency: a revived German Fascist-type nationalism. True Socialists, remembering how at the end of the Weimar Republic Communists had in fact facilitated the rise of Nazism, defied Communist pleas

and demands ; men like Gustav Dahrendorf and Kurt Schumacher never had any doubts about the true nature of Communism. A few Socialists in the Soviet zone believed that the Communist party was genuinely anti-Fascist, that it would radically purge all former Nazis and would recruit its own cadre, mostly young, untrained people from the unpropertied classes. The claim that the German Democratic Republic, formally established in 1949, would become the first Socialist state in German history, that by its extrusion of Nazis and its dismantling of capitalism it was cleansing German soil of Nazi poison, that out of devastation it was building an egalitarian society —all this had a certain appeal, particularly for writers and intellectuals. Bertolt Brecht, long the lyricist of a proletarian culture, happily left his American exile, with its capitalist culture and McCarthyite hysteria, in order to win honors and his own theater in East Berlin. Lesser writers followed. Thomas Mann accepted an honor from the new state —though he decided to settle in Switzerland, spiritually equidistant from both Germanies. In the DDR as elsewhere at the time, Communists had the inestimable advantage of claiming to be the vanguard of a new culture; judge us by some distant future, they said, and not by the bleak present. Intellectuals, once committed to the faith, found it hard to break with it, to confess their error to themselves.

In the last few months an old German word with no English or French analogue has reappeared over and over again in books and articles. *Lebenslüge* roughly means the lie that is life-giving, the lie that is essential to a particular life, the lie that a person or a people may know to be false but without which the person or state would perish. The DDR was saddled with one *Lebenslüge* from the start: the fundamental insistence that the Soviet Union was at once liberator and fraternal master and model. The East Germans sensed the travesty of truth: they knew that the Red Army had raped and looted, they knew that the Soviets had despoiled their country, and they sensed as well that their rulers, at least in the beginning, were servile instruments of Soviet masters.

One of the many East German witticisms — the one commodity in which they outperformed the West Germans — insisted that the Russians were indeed brothers with whom one had indissoluble fraternal bonds: friends one chooses, brothers are unalterably inflicted. Gradually the anti-Fascist principle, the sole threadbare claim to legitimacy, lost its credibility as well: to call the Berlin Wall the great anti-Fascist wall was too grim an absurdity.

The Soviets and the DDR's rulers needed each other. For the former, East Germany was the frontier state, the most important defense post with the greatest arsenal of weapons; for the rulers of the DDR, the Soviet presence was the ultimate reserve army against their own people. The Federal Republic, its own legitimacy accepted by its citizens, had tied itself to the West, but these attachments enhanced security and prosperity and corresponded to the wishes of most of its people. In the 1980s the DDR regime, encouraged by the Federal Republic's ever more enterprising *Ostpolitik*, sought to gain some greater room for maneuver, some independence from Moscow. Characteristically, Honecker's greatest moment of independence came at the end, when he banned Soviet publications carrying Gorbachev's liberalizing message. To the end, Honecker remained a German Leninist — German because there was a tinge of sentimentality to his inhumanity. He and his closest advisers, most of them ardent believers in the powers of repression, ignored the younger members of the *nomenklatura* who understood the need for reform in East Germany. Their day came too late. The DDR was founded on deception, on various *Lebenslügen*, and its end was hastened by the self-deception of its aged leaders.

As I have said, the end of the DDR will inevitably affect the interpretation of its history and of the entire period when there were two Germanies. At this point I want to ask myself: how is my comprehension of the DDR a function of private experiences? Let me put these experiences before you — for what they might say about the DDR and about me as an interpreter. My first con-

tact came in June 1950 in Munich, when I spent an evening with a young German writer, Peter Hacks, a contemporary, the son of close friends of my parents. The Hackses were so-called Aryans, radical Socialists under Weimar, who had behaved with exemplary decency under the Nazis.

Peter was about to emigrate to the newly established DDR, to the anti-Fascist bastion, hoping to work with Brecht. For hours that night we argued, I trying to dissuade him from subjecting himself to yet another dictatorship, he certain that socialism with whatever distortions offered a freer atmosphere than cold-war capitalism. I failed and he went; eventually his plays were performed in both parts of Germany. At times he fell into disfavor, but he retained his faith to the very end.

In the summer of 1954 I taught at the Free University in West Berlin; in those days it was relatively easy to cross into East Berlin, with its extraordinary theaters and inexpensive bookstores. But much of what I saw and felt in East Berlin reminded me of my childhood under National Socialism: the omnipresent police, the grimness of the border guards, the sea of flags and banners. Each visit was a trial—despite the protection of an American passport.¹⁵

Then in 1961 —just before the wall went up — and in 1962, roughly a year later, I was allowed (via the help of French colleagues) to work in the great archives that the DDR had inherited from Prussia and the Reich at the end of the war. For two weeks each time I stayed in Merseburg, a small town in the ecologically destroyed heartland of East German industry. There was pervasive smog and the smell of brown coal; the few stores had almost nothing to sell: canned cherries from Bulgaria were the great luxury. It was all so drab and shabby. I was the first American scholar, or one of the first, in the archives and the young archivists wanted to talk to me. They had become archivists by choice; in-

¹⁵ On this, see my “Germany Revisited. Berlin 1954,” in *The Failure of Illiberalism, Essays on the Political Culture of Modern Germany* (New York, reissue, 1992), pp. 210–33.

terested in the past, they had shied away from becoming historians because that would have subjected them to the most rigorous ideological dogmas. They wanted to tell me how much they disliked the regime and what their reasons had been to stay in the DDR — mostly concern for parents. I sensed that they were living in a gray zone of outward obedience and inner dissent. They yearned for “more light,” for greater freedom and a better life — yet for all their misgivings they had a certain pride in their society, if not in their state. I wandered into a Lutheran church that bore the bold placard *Museumsreif? Nein, lebensfähig!* (Ripe for a Museum? No, very much alive!) and the fervent choir struck me as performing an act of unacknowledged defiance. I found the people I met sympathetic and suffering; I also experienced the peculiar pleasure of mocking the regime with impunity or talking to people who in some ways defied it — with far less impunity. Back in West Germany, enjoying creature comforts and yet aware that I missed some kind of healthy pain, I was astounded that my West German friends and colleagues had so little interest in the East Germans.

I tried to keep in touch, to keep informed about an abhorrent regime and its confused, ambivalent people. Then in the late 1970s I sensed that life in and between the two Germanies had begun to change. In 1979 I wrote of the Federal Republic “as the strongest state between the United States and the USSR, and the state with the greatest national grievance.”¹⁶ I argued that *Ostpolitik* was clearly successful in mitigating this grievance: the ties between the two Germanies were becoming closer. The DDR’s efforts at claiming the Prussian heritage — its reinstallation of the famous statue of Frederick the Great was an example — pointed to change, as did much more significantly the joint East-West celebration in 1983 of the 500th anniversary of Luther’s birth. On June 17, 1987, in a speech I gave before the Bundestag on the day of national unity, commemorating the uprising of June 1953, I

¹⁶ See my *Dreams and Delusions: The Drama of German History* (New York, reissue, 1989), p. 209.

said, “On this day we should honor the clear, courageous voices from the other German state that demand human dignity and human rights. These voices often come from the church, for which the teachings and the example of Dietrich Bonhoeffer are still very much alive.” On the same occasion I mentioned Weizsäcker’s speech of May 8, 1985, being hailed abroad as the “authentic voice of the Federal Republic, perhaps even of the silent suprapstate nation.”¹⁷

Shortly before and then after the destruction of the Berlin wall in 1989, I met many of the leaders of East German dissent. In 1991, at the meeting of the West German Academy for Poetry in Weimar, I heard a well-known West German professor denounce the DDR’s abuse of the German language — it was his own form of *Abwicklung*. I objected that he had not mentioned that the language had already been abused under an earlier dictatorship. He seemed baffled by my comment. An East German pastor who had been active in the oppositional movement was listening to the same speech and said, “I used to feel like a liberator [*Befreier*] and now I feel like someone vanquished [*Besiegter*].” In 1992, when at the University of Halle, I met an opposition leader who was now in charge of the commission to review members of the university. Herself young and always uncompromising, she had no patience with those who wanted to forgive their colleagues for ambiguous behavior because of extenuating circumstances.

In short, having had the good fortune of seeing something of the DDR and having had a sympathetic interest in its people, I continue to have concerns about their life now. The history of the DDR — from its beginning to its dissolution — is very much a part of the drama of German history.

The DDR leaves an ambiguous legacy, as does the Federal Republic; the difference is that the institutions of the old FRG have not ended but are in the process of having to adapt to different conditions. The old political culture of the Federal Republic

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 304, 294.

is being tested and, in part, measured by Eastern ideals. In the historic rivalry between Communism and Social Democracy, the former by its very collapse has scored a major triumph. Many people, especially on the political Right, rejoice in confounding Communism and Socialism, interpreting the dismal failure of the one as irredeemably discrediting the other as well. The historic task of Democratic Socialism has been to correct the most grievous, ruthless qualities of what Jacques Delors once called “capitalisme sauvage.” It is doubtful that this task will ever be totally completed.

The DDR is dead, and some East Germans already have their nostalgic moments. Disappointed in the present, prompted by a selective memory, they ask: “Was everything wrong in the last forty years?” And they tend to erase from memory the hopelessness of the old regime and remember that at some level of subsistence, even if drab and uniform, ordinary citizens could count on the essentials of life: housing however wretched, food however meager, medical care however inferior and indifferent. They remember that in the old DDR there was no crime, no drugs, no pornography. The Communist rulers of the DDR could have echoed President Nixon’s boast: “We have taken crime off the streets.” The government had assumed a monopoly of crime.

Citizens remember the much vaunted *Kinderkrippen*, a grandiose term for child care centers to which working parents could send their children. The memory of the *Kinderkrippen* evokes the DDR’s traditional concern for family life, for women’s rights, including the nontraditional right of abortion, for social welfare — all this in contrast to the cold life in unified Germany, where the cash nexus rules all. These *Kinderkrippen* have become a kind of talisman for the better part of DDR life, and people forget that these benefits were palliatives to cover deeper pain. The *Kinderkrippen* were the decorous part of a controlled society that violated at will the health of the home it pretended to protect.

On some deep psychological level the unified Germany is more divided than before; the physical wall has been internalized.

Where once was the untroubled hope that at some future date the division of the country, unnaturally maintained, would be healed, there are now painful inequalities of power, wealth, experience, and assertiveness. The living standard of East Germans is still very much lower than that of West Germans; wages are lower and unemployment at least three times higher. Economic inequalities heighten psychic discontent: Ossies are given to self-pity, Wessies to arrogance and exasperation. Some West Germans themselves complain of Western self-righteousness. The country is rent by a psychological dissonance. Both sides deserve understanding, and there are many Germans who demand solidarity not in words but in deeds. But their pleas are lost on pusillanimous politicians who in confusion think mostly of the next election.

In March 1993 the Bonn Parliament voted a Solidarity Pact that has brought some predictability into the economic picture. It provides for new taxes to fund specified payments to the new *Länder*. Approximately 7 percent of GNP will be transferred to the East over the next decade —roughly 1 trillion D-Marks. Four months later even the European Community agreed, reluctantly, to provide 27.5 billion D-Marks over six years to the same *Länder* out of its regional assistance funds. The strains are clear: Germany as a whole is in a deep economic recession, with continued negative growth; according to many observers, it is the most serious recession since the founding of the Federal Republic. Hence the great unease pervading both parts of Germany. Still, the Solidarity Pact affords real chances for the new *Länder*, as Kurt Biedenkopf, minister-president of Saxony, made clear in a speech to his Diet —a candid speech that exemplified the possibilities of democratic leadership.

The old Federal Republic has also gained greater freedom in 1989, but a very different kind of freedom from the East Germans'. Unification has fulfilled the old national dream and has attenuated, on some level even removed, Germany's dependency on its Western allies. From the beginning of the Federal Repub-

lic, it needed Allied protection, most clearly in the ever vulnerable city of Berlin. For forty years this dependency set the parameters of choice. Now questions about German national interest and purpose reemerge in full force. In the ongoing debate there are some who demand greater German assertiveness, who are tired of being held hostage to the memory of the Nazi past. That sentiment is so strong that Jürgen Habermas has warned against yet another *Lebenslüge* for Germany, the *Lebenslüge*, as he puts it, “of us being a normal nation.”¹⁸ How understandable the wish of so many Germans to be liberated of the burden of the past, to “relativize” Nazi crimes, to seek a retrospective moral equality —how understandable, and probably how unattainable!

It is one of the tragic ironies of the revolutions of hope of 1989 that they coincided with deepening crises in the West. The newly liberated countries reached out for a market economy at a time of worldwide recession; they sought to embrace democracy when the democratic countries had plunged into scandals of corruption and a general paralysis of leadership. They looked to Europe just as the hopes of Europe 1992 faded in the post-Maastricht malaise, and when the term “democratic deficit” seemed to have resonance beyond the internal arrangements of the European Community.

Germany’s unanticipated unification, with its staggering demands, came at a time when the old Federal Republic was already experiencing mutually reinforcing pressures. The West German economy —in the past the guarantor of West German democracy —was slowing down. The capitalist world was not at its most dynamic, or at what Joseph Schumpeter defined as its most destructively creative, when East Germans clamored for a free market and the many gurus of the market economy urged instant transformation. Nor had West Germany and its leaders been immune to the greed and corruption of the Reaganite 1980s. Faith in the political system was shaken. Put differently, the twin miracles of

¹⁸ Jürgen Habermas, “Die zweite Lebenslüge der Bundesrepublik: Wir sind wieder normal geworden,” *Die Zeit*, December 11, 1992.

Bonn's beginnings, the economic miracle and the political miracle—that is, the emergence after the devastation of the Nazi years of unprecedented political leadership in Germany—had come to an end. Germany now faces its gravest crisis since the end of the war.

A new ultra-right-wing party, the Republicans, has scored impressive victories. I doubt that the massive increase in asylum seekers between 1987 and 1992 (some 800 percent) is solely or even primarily responsible for the dissatisfaction that this party exploits. Various instances of corruption have tainted the political system—and had done so even before President von Weizsäcker in 1991 delivered his severe strictures on the German party system, which, he believed, had come to diminish the democratic element in Germany's political process.¹⁹ These very strictures on democracy may have exceeded the limits of his constitutional prerogatives.

People in all parts of Germany feel an imbalance between the economic and moral requirements of their new situation and their political response. There has hardly been a time in which the political classes were held in such low esteem—as is true in the rest of Europe. The uncertainties prompted Marion Countess Dönhoff, Helmut Schmidt, and a few like-minded citizens to issue a manifesto in November 1992 under the title “Because the Country Must Change.”²⁰ The message is that consumerism in the *Raufgesellschaft*, in competitive greed, is not enough. Or consider Jens Reich's fears of future unrest “when I observe our dance around the golden calf, called property, prosperity, consumerism, . . . which we hold sacrosanct. Even now I see the coming disgust and the helpless failure of the putative victors. Late socialism clung to the illusion of eternal growth and progress. We should not succumb to it under different guise.”²¹

¹⁹ *Richard von Weizsäcker: Im Gespräch mit Gunter Hoffmann und Werner A. Perger* (Frankfurt am Main, 1992).

²⁰ Marion Dönhoff et al., *Ein Manifest: Weil das Land sich Ändern muss* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg, 1992).

²¹ Reich, *Abschied*, p. 165.

The eruption of xenophobic violence, the killing of Turkish children, has horrified the world. Hundreds of skinheads are supported by thousands of nationalist, perhaps even neo-Nazi sympathizers, while millions of Germans organize silent marches to protest this ugliness, a demonstrative solidarity never before seen in Germany. To some, the very silence of these marches, however impressive in themselves, is disturbing. Germans need speech, thought, and moral authority; the charged questions about asylum seekers and the solidarity pacts proposed to deal with needed transfer payments to the East need public argument. Over and over again Chancellor Kohl has been admonished to “tell the truth.”

Freedom has brought its own discontents, and Germans, with their terrible pasts, have to live in the knowledge that there is no acceptable alternative to freedom; for them, as for all of us, the great task is to ground freedom in the exercise of citizenship. They too need leadership that heeds the wisdom of Thucydides: “Now a man may have a policy which he cannot clearly expound, and then he might as well have none at all.”²²

In both parts of Germany there is a palpable deficit of trust — trust in leaders, trust in almost all aspects of life. The English philosopher John Dunn has spoken of trust as the core element of democracy, and this truth is confirmed empirically in Robert Putnam’s study of Italian politics, just published.²³ While trust is in short supply in all our countries, its steady decline in Germany is alarming. Degrees of trust cannot be quantified, unlike the interest rates of the Bundesbank — yet the two are linked. The D-Mark remains the symbol and the instrument of Germany’s economic stability and the unarticulated incantation could be “In the D-Mark we trust.” While that same D-Mark will — by the painful transfer

²² Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, book II, chapter 60.

²³ Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, 1993). See, as one example John Dunn, “Trust and Political Agency,” in Diego Gambetta (ed.), *Trust, Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 73–93. I owe this last reference to Russell Hardin.

of some trillion DM in the next decade —transform the new *Länder*, especially Saxony, into the most modern region of Europe, the moral-psychological recovery and unity will take much longer.

I say this with a certain sadness, sadness that the promise of 1989, or what I thought of as Germany's second chance in this century, has been mired in pain and disappointment. Once again Germany's history did not have to be like this; there was nothing inevitable about it. More truth, better leadership, and greater tolerance would have made a difference. Even now pessimists see a political system without leadership —and see a repeat of Weimar; optimists see the possibility of rejuvenation and reciprocal learning, of which so far there has been too little.

But let me end on a different note. My friend Leonard Krieger, for so many years at home in Yale, wrote a great work, *The German Idea of Freedom*, an analysis of how in German thought and politics the idea of freedom has always been linked to the authority of the state.²⁴ To seek freedom in the defiance of the state is not part of the German political tradition, as it is of the English, Dutch, French, and American traditions. Yet twice in the last half century Germans defied a tyrannical state: on July 20, 1944, a few Germans tried to overthrow Hitler —they failed, and the two Germanies have had a difficult time assimilating or celebrating their memory; and in the fall of 1989 hundreds of thousands of East Germans successfully defied their regime, admittedly at a time when neighboring countries had already thrown off the Communist yoke, but nonetheless it was a momentous achievement in German history. Their leaders have already sunk into oblivion, and the memory of those great days has faded. People refer to these events as *die Wende*, the turn, thus transforming what had been dramatic and heroic into something prosaic and bureaucratic. But for all the disappointments that have followed, we should celebrate not merely the collapse of the wall, but the men and women

²⁴ Leonard Krieger, *The German Idea of Freedom: History of a Political Tradition* (Boston, 1957).

who by their demand for a better and freer life made that collapse one of the great moments in their history and ours.

The revolutions of 1989 —however darkened in the meantime by the return of barbarism in many parts of the world —have given us an opportunity to live in trust and truth, to validate the hopes of Václav Havel. It is not only great universities that depend on *lux et veritas* for life.